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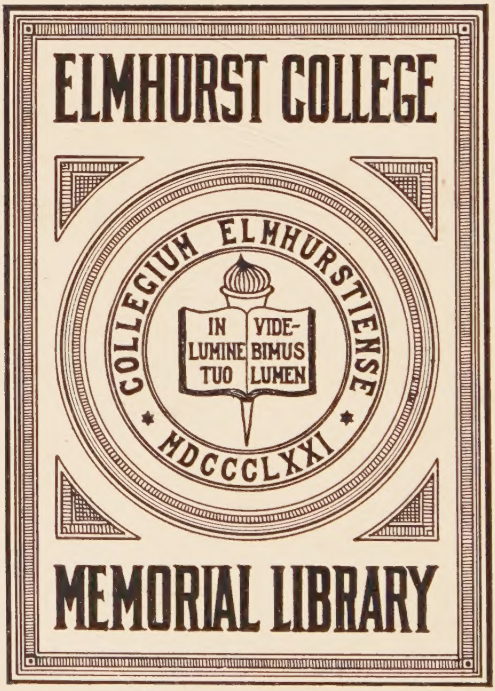
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WORKS OF

MARTIN LUTHER

WORKS

OF

MARTIN LUTHER

With Introductions and Notes

THE PHILADELPHIA EDITION

VOLUME TWO

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CONTENTS

PAGE

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND CONCERNING THE BROTHERHOODS (1519).
Introduction (J. J. Schindel) 7
Translation (J. J. Schindel) 9

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE BAN (1520).
Introduction (J. J. Schindel) 35
Translation (J. J. Schindel) 37

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY (1520).
Introduction (C. M. Jacobs) 57
Translation (C. M. Jacobs) 61

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH (1520).
Introduction (A. T. W. Steinhaeuser) 167
Translation (A. T. W. Steinhaeuser) 170

A TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (1520).
Introduction (W. A. Lambert) 297
Translation (W. A. Lambert) 301

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE CREED, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (1520).
Introduction (C. M. Jacobs) 351
Translation (C. M. Jacobs) 354

THE EIGHT WITTENBERG SERMONS (1522).
Introduction (A. Steimle) 387
Translation (A. Steimle) 391

THAT DOCTRINES OF MEN ARE TO BE REJECTED (1522).
Introduction (W. A. Lambert) 429
Translation (W. A. Lambert) 431

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A TREATISE

CONCERNING

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY AND TRUE BODY OF CHRIST

AND CONCERNING

THE BROTHERHOODS

1519

INTRODUCTION

THIS treatise belongs to a series of four which appeared in the latter half of the year 1519, the others treating of the Ban, Penance, and Baptism. The latter two with our treatise form a trilogy which Luther dedicates to the Duchess Margaret of Braunschweig and Lüneburg.

He undertakes the work, as he says, "because there are so many troubled and distressed ones—and I myself have had the experience—who do not know what the holy sacraments, full of all grace, are, nor how to use them, but, alas! presume upon quieting their consciences with their works, instead of seeking peace in God's grace through the holy sacrament; so completely are the holy sacraments obscured and withdrawn from us by the teaching of men."[1]

In a letter to Spalatin[2] of December 18, 1519, he says that no one need expect treatises from him on the other sacraments, since he cannot acknowledge them as such.

A copy from the press of John Grünenberg of Wittenberg reached Duke George of Saxony by December 24, 1519, who on December 27th already entered his protest against it with the Elector Frederick and the Bishops of Meissen and Merseburg.[3] Duke George took exception particularly to Luther's advocacy of the two kinds in the Communion.[4] This statement of Luther, however, was but incidental to his broad and rich treatment of the subject of the treatise.

It was Luther's first extended statement of his view of the Lord's Supper. As such it is very significant, not only because of what he says, but also because of what he does not say. There is no reference at all to that which was then distinctive of the Church's doctrine, the sacrifice of the mass. Luther has already abandoned this position, but is either too loyal a churchman to attack it or has not as yet found an evangelical interpretation of the idea of sacrifice in the mass, such as he gives us in the later treatise on the New Testament.[5] However, already in this treatise he gives us the antidote for the false doctrine of sacrifice in the emphasis laid upon faith, on which all depends.[6] The object of this faith, however, is not yet stated to be the promise of the forgiveness of sins contained in the Words of Institution, which are a new and eternal testament.[7]

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[1] See CLEMEN, I, p. 175.

[2] ENDERS, II, no. 254. SMITH, Luther's Correspondence, I, no. 206.

[3] GESS, Akten und Briefe zur Kirchenpolitik Herzog Georgs von Sachsen, Leipzig, 1905.

[4] See below, p. 9.

[5] In this edition, Vol. I, pp. 294–336. See especially pp. 312 ff.

[6] See below, pp. 19, 25.

[7] Treatise on the New Testament, Vol. I, pp. 297 ff.

The treatise shows the influence of the German mystics[1] on Luther's thought, but much more of the Scriptures which furnish him with argument and illustration for his mystical conceptions. Christ's natural body is made of less importance than the spiritual body,[2] the communion of saints; just as in the later treatise on the New Testament the stress is placed on the Words of Institution with their promise of the forgiveness of sins. Luther does not try to explain philosophically what is inexplicable, but is content to accept on faith the fact of the presence of Christ in the sacrament, "how and where,—we leave to Him."[3]

Of interest is the emphasis on the spiritual body, the communion of saints. Luther knows that although excommunication is exclusion from external communion, it is not necessarily exclusion from real spiritual communion with Christ and His saints.[4] No wonder, then, that he can later treat the papal bull with so much indifference; it cannot exclude him from the communion of saints.

The treatise consists of three main divisions: sections 1 to 3 treating of the outward sign of the sacrament; sections 4 to 16, of the inner significance; sections 17 to 22, of faith. Added to this is the appendix on the subject of the brotherhoods or sodalities, associations of laymen for charitable and devotional purposes. Of these there were many at this time, Wittenberg alone being reported as having twenty-one. Luther objects not only to their immoral conduct, but also to the spiritual pride which they engendered. He finds in the communion of saints the fundamental brotherhood instituted in the holy sacrament, the common brotherhood of all saints.

The modern world needs to have these truths driven home anew, and, barring a few scholastic phrases here and there, cannot find them better expressed than in the remarkably elevated and devotional language of Luther in this treatise.

The text of the treatise is found in the following editions:
Weimar Ed., vol. ii, 742; Erlangen Ed., vol. xxvii, 28; Walch Ed., Vol. xix, 522; St. Louis Ed., xix, 426; Clemen, vol. i, 196; Berlin Ed., vol. iii, 259.

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F. GRAEBKE, Die Konstruktion der Abendmahlslehre Luthers in ihrer Entwicklung dargestellt, Leipzig, 1908.

J. J. SCHINDEL.

ALLENTOWN, PA.

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[1] See KÖSTLIN, Luthers Theologie, I, 292 f.; also HERING, Die Mystik Luthers, Leipzig, 1879, pp. 171–174

[2] See below, p. 23.

[3] See below, p. 20.

[4] See Treatise concerning the Ban, below, p. 37.

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY AND TRUE BODY OF CHRIST AND CONCERNING THE BROTHERHOODS

1519

1. Like the sacrament of holy baptism,[1] the holy sacrament of the altar, or of the holy and true body of Christ, has three parts which it is necessary for us to know. The first is the sacrament, or sign, the second is the significance of this sacrament, the third is the faith required by both of these; the three parts which must be found in every sacrament. The sacrament must be external and visible, and have some material form; the significance must be internal and spiritual, within the spirit of man; faith must apply and use both these.

The First Part of the Sacrament: the Sign

2. The sacrament, or outward sign, is in the form of bread and wine, just as baptism has as its sign water; although the sign is not simply the form of bread and wine, but the use of the bread and wine in eating and drinking, just as the water of baptism is used by immersion or by pouring. For the sacrament, or sign, must be received, or must at least be desired, if it is to work a blessing. Although at present the two kinds are not given the people daily, as of old,—nor is this necessary,—yet the priesthood partakes of it daily in the sight of the people, and it is enough that the people desire it daily and receive one kind at the proper time, as the Christian Church ordains and offers.[2]

3. I deem it well, however, that the Church in a general council should again decree[3] that all persons, as well as the priests, be given both kinds. Not that one kind were

[1] See Treatise on Baptism, Vol. I, pp. 56 ff.
[2] Note the advance in The Babylonian Captivity, below, pp. 178 ff.
[3] Cf. Babylonian Captivity, below, p. 186.

insufficient, since indeed the simple desire of faith suffices, as St. Augustine says: "Why preparest thou stomach and teeth? Only believe and thou hast already partaken of the sacrament";[1] but because it would be meet and right that the form, or sign, of the sacrament be given not in part only, but in its entirety, just as I have said of baptism[2] that it were more fitting to immerse than to pour the water, for the sake of the completeness and perfection of the sign. For this sacrament signifies the complete union and the undivided fellowship of the saints, as we shall see, and this is poorly and unfittingly indicated by only one part of the sacrament. Nor is there as great a danger in the use of the cup as is supposed, since the people seldom go to this sacrament, and Christ was well aware of all future dangers,[3] and yet saw fit to institute both kinds for the use of all His Christians.

The Second Part of the Sacrament: the Significance

4. The significance or purpose of this sacrament is the fellowship of all saints, whence it derives its common name synaxis or communio, that is, fellowship; and communicare means to take part in this fellowship, or as we say, to go to the sacrament, because Christ and all saints are one spiritual body, just as the inhabitants of a city are one community and body, each citizen being a member of the other and a member of the entire city. All the saints, therefore, are members of Christ and of the Church, which is a spiritual and eternal city of God, and whoever is taken into this city is said to be received into the community of saints, and to be incorporated into Christ's spiritual body and made a member of Him. On the other hand, excommunicare means to put out of the community and to sever a member from this body, and that is called in our language "putting one under the ban"; yet there is a difference, as I shall show in the following treatise, concerning the ban.[4]

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[1] Cf. Sermo, 112, cap. 5 (Migne, xxxviii, 615).
[2] See Vol. I, p. 56.
[3] E. g., the danger of spilling the wine.
[4] See p. 37.

To receive the bread and wine of this sacrament, then, is nothing else than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and incorporation with Christ and all saints. As though a citizen were given a sign, a document, or some other token as a proof that he is a citizen of the city, a member of the community. Even so St. Paul says: "We are all one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of one bread and of one cup." 1 Cor. 10:17

5. This fellowship is of such a nature that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and His saints[1] are imparted and communicated to him who receives this sacrament; again, all his sufferings and sins are communicated to them, and thus love engenders love and unites all. To carry out our homely figure: it is like a city where every citizen shares with all the others the name, honor, freedom, trade, customs, usages, help, support, protection and the like, of that city, and on the other hand shares all the danger of fire and flood, enemies and death, losses, imposts and the like. For he who would have part in the common profits must also share in the losses, and ever recompense love with love. Here we see that whoever wrongs a citizen wrongs the entire city and all the citizens; whoever benefits one deserves favor and thanks from all the others. So, too, in our natural body, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians xii, where this sacrament is given a spiritual explanation: the members have a care one for another; whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; whether one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. It is apparent then that if any one's foot hurts him, nay, even the smallest toe, the eye at once looks toward it, the fingers grasp it, the face frowns, the whole body bends to it, and all are concerned with this small member; on the other hand, if it is cared for, all the other members rejoice. This figure must be well weighed if one wishes to understand this sacrament; for the Scriptures employ it for the sake of the unlearned. 1 Cor. 12: 25 f.

[1] Used here and above in the New Testament sense of true Christians, living or dead, cf. 1 Cor. 1 : 2.

6. In this sacrament, therefore, God Himself gives through the priest a sure sign to man, to show that, in like manner, he shall be united with Christ and His saints and have all things in common with them; that Christ's sufferings and life shall be his own, together with the lives and sufferings of all the saints, so that whoever does him an injury does injury to Christ and all the saints, as He says
Zech. 2:8 by the prophet, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye"; on the other hand, whoever does him a kindness
Matt. 25:40 does it to Christ and all His saints, as He says, "What ye have done unto one of the least of My brethren, that ye have done unto Me." Again, he must be willing to share all the burdens and misfortunes of Christ and His saints, their sorrow and joy. These two sides of the fellowship we shall consider more fully.

7. Now, adversity assails us in more than one form. There is, in the first place, the sin remaining in our flesh after baptism, the inclination to anger, hatred, pride and unchastity, and so forth, which assails us as long as we live. Against this we not only need the help of the congregation and of Christ, in order that they may fight with us against it, but it is also necessary that Christ and His saints intercede for us before God, that sin may not be accounted to us according to God's strict judgment. Therefore, in order to give us strength and courage against these sins, God gives us this sacrament, as though He said: "Behold, many kinds of sin assail thee; take this sign by which I give thee My pledge that sin assails not only thee but My Son Christ, and all His saints in heaven and on earth. Therefore, be bold and confident; thou fightest not alone; great help and support are round
Ps. 104:15 about thee." King David, also, says of this bread: "The bread strengtheneth man's heart"; and the Scriptures in other places characterize this sacrament as a strengthening.
Acts 9:19 So in Acts ix it is written of St. Paul that he was baptised and when he had received meat, he was strengthened. In the second place, the evil spirit assails us unceasingly with

many sins and afflictions. In the third place, the world is full of wickedness and entices and persecutes us and is altogether bad. Finally, our own guilty conscience assails us with our past sins, with the fear of death, and with the pains of hell. All of these afflictions make us weary and weaken us, unless we seek and find strength in this fellowship.

8. If any one be in despair, if he be distressed by his sinful conscience or terrified by death, or have any other burden on his heart, and desire to be rid of them all, let him go joyfully to the sacrament of the altar and lay down his grief in the midst of the congregation and seek help from the entire company of the spiritual body; just as when a citizen whose property has suffered injury or misfortune at the hands of his enemies makes complaint to his town council and fellow citizens and asks them for help. Therefore, the immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this sacrament, that we may there lay down all misery and tribulation and put it on the congregation, and especially on Christ, and may joyfully strengthen and comfort ourselves and say: "Though I am a sinner and have fallen, though this or that misfortune has befallen me, I will go to the sacrament to receive a sign from God that I have on my side Christ's righteousness, life and sufferings, with all holy angels and all the blessed in heaven, and all pious men on earth. If I die, I am not alone in death; if I suffer, they suffer with me. I have shared all my misfortune with Christ and the saints, since I have a sure sign of their love toward me." Lo, this is the benefit to be derived from this sacrament, this is the use we should make of it; then the heart cannot but rejoice and be comforted.

9. When you have partaken of this sacrament, therefore, or desire to partake of it, you must in turn also share the misfortunes of the congregation, as was said.[1] But what are these? Christ in heaven and the angels together with

[1] See p. 11.

all the saints have no misfortunes of their own, save when injury is done to the truth and to God's Word; yea, as we said, every bane and blessing of all the saints on earth affects them. There your heart must go out in love and devotion and learn that this sacrament is a sacrament of love, and that love and service are given you and you again must render love and service to Christ and His needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in His holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing: you must fight, work, pray, and, if you cannot do more, have heartfelt sympathy. That is bearing in your turn the misfortune and adversity of Christ and His saints. Here the saying of Paul applies,
Gal. 6:2 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Lo, thus you uphold them all, thus they all again in turn uphold you, and all things are in common, both good and evil. Then all things become easy, and the evil spirit cannot prevail against such a community. When
Luke 22:19 f. Christ instituted the sacrament He said: "This is My body which is given for you, this is My blood which is shed for you; as oft as ye do this, remember Me." As though He said: "I am the Head, I will first give Myself for you, will make your suffering and misfortune Mine own and bear it for you, that you in your turn may do the same for Me and for one another, have all things in common in Me and with Me, and let this sacrament be unto you a sure token of this all, that you may not forget Me, but daily call to mind and admonish one another by what I have done for you and still am doing, that you may be strengthened thereby, and also bear with one another."

10. This is also a reason, indeed the chief reason, why this sacrament is received many times, while baptism is administered but once. Baptism is the beginning and entrance to a new life, in the course of which boundless adversities assail us through sins and suffering, our own and those of others. The devil, the world and our own flesh and con-

science, as was said,[1] never cease to pursue us and oppress us. Therefore we need the strength, support and help of Christ and of His saints, which are pledged us in this sacrament as by a sure token, by which we are made one with them and are incorporated with them, and all our suffering is laid down in the midst of the congregation.

Therefore, this holy sacrament is of little or no benefit to those who have no misfortune or anxiety or do not feel their adversity. For it is given only to those who need strength and comfort, who have timid hearts and terrified consciences, and who are assailed by sin, or have even fallen into sin. What could it do for untroubled and falsely secure spirits, which neither need nor desire it? For the Mother of God[2] says, "He filleth only the hungry, and comforteth them that are distressed." Luke 1:53

11. That the disciples, therefore, might by all means be worthy and well prepared for this sacrament He first made them sorrowful, held before them His departure and death, by which they were exceeding troubled. And then He greatly terrified them when He said that one of them should betray Him. When they were thus full of sorrow and anxiety and were concerned about the sorrow and sin of betrayal, then they were worthy, and He gave them His holy Body to strengthen them. By which He teaches us that this sacrament is strength and comfort for those whom sin and evil trouble and distress; as St. Augustine also says,[3] "This food demands only hungry souls and is shunned by none so greatly as by a sated soul which does not need it." Just as the Jews were required to eat the Passover with bitter herbs, standing and in haste, which also signifies that this sacrament demands souls that are desirous, needy and sorrowful. Now if one will make the afflictions of Christ and of all Christians his own, will defend the truth, oppose unrighteousness, help bear the need of the innocent Matt. 26:21 ff. Ex. 12:8, 11

[1] See above, pp. 12, 13, and Vol. I, pp. 59 ff.
[2] The Virgin Mary.
[3] Cf. Enarratio in Ps. XXI (Migne, xxxvi, 178).

and the sufferings of all Christians, he will find affliction and adversity enough, besides that which his evil nature, the world, the devil and sin daily inflict upon him. And it is God's will and purpose to set so many hounds upon us and drive us, and everywhere provide us bitter herbs, that we may long for this strength and take delight in the holy sacrament, and thus be worthy of it, that is, desire it.

12. It is His will, then, that we partake of it frequently, in order that we may remember Him and exercise ourselves in this fellowship according to His example. For if His example were no longer kept before us, the fellowship also would soon be forgotten. So we at present see to our sorrow that many masses are held and yet the Christian fellowship which should be preached, practiced and kept before us by Christ's example has quite perished; so that we hardly know what purpose this sacrament serves, or how it should be used, nay, with our masses we frequently destroy this fellowship and pervert everything. This is the fault of the preachers who do not preach the Gospel nor the sacraments, but their humanly devised fables concerning the many works[1] to be done and the ways to live aright.

But in times past this sacrament was so properly used, and the people were taught to understand this fellowship so well, that they even gathered material food and goods[2] in the church and there distributed them among those who were in need, as St. Paul writes. Of this we have a relic in the word "collect,"[3] which still remains in the mass, and means a general collection, just as a common fund is gathered to be given to the poor. That was the time when so many became martyrs and saints. There were fewer masses, but much strength and blessing resulted from the masses; Christians cared for one another, assisted one another, sympathized with one another, bore one another's burden and affliction. This has all disappeared, and there remain

1 Cor. 11:21

[1] Penitential works.
[2] Cf. Acts 2 : 46 f.
[3] See Vol. I, p. 310.

only the many masses and the many who receive this sacrament without in the least understanding or practicing what it signifies.

13. There are those, indeed, who would share the benefits but not the cost, that is, who gladly hear in this sacrament that the help, fellowship and assistance of all the saints are promised and given to them, but who, because they fear the world, are unwilling in their turn to contribute to this fellowship, to help the poor, to endure sins, to care for the sick, to suffer with the suffering, to intercede for others, to defend the truth, to seek the reformation of the Church and of all Christians at the risk of life, property and honor. They are unwilling to suffer disfavor, harm, shame or death, although it is God's will that they be driven, for the sake of the truth and their neighbors, to desire the great grace and strength of this sacrament. They are self-seeking persons, whom this sacrament does not benefit. Just as we could not endure a citizen who wanted to be helped, protected and made free by the community, and yet in his turn would do nothing for it nor serve it. No, we on our part must make others' evil our own, if we desire Christ and His saints to make our evil their own; then will the fellowship be complete and justice be done to the sacrament. For the sacrament has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a man that he is made one with all others.

14. To symbolize this fellowship, God has appointed such signs of the sacrament as in every way serve this purpose and by their very form incite and move us to this fellowship. Just as the bread is made out of many grains which have been ground and mixed together, and out of the many bodies of grain there comes the one body of the bread, in which each grain loses its form and body and acquires the common body of the bread, and as the drops of wine losing their own form become the body of one wine: so should it be with us, and is, indeed, if we use this sacrament aright. Christ with all saints, by His love, takes upon Himself our form, fights Phil. 2:7

with us against sin, death and all evil; this enkindles in us such love that we take His form, rely upon His righteousness, life and blessedness, and through the interchange of His blessings and our misfortunes are one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common. Eph. 5:32 This is a great sacrament,[1] says Paul, that Christ and the Eph. 5:31 Church are one flesh and bone. Again, through this same Judg. 9:2 love, we are to be changed and to make the infirmities of all other Christians our own, take upon ourselves their form and their necessity and make theirs all the good that is within our power, that they may enjoy it. That is a real fellowship, and that is the true significance of this sacrament. In this way we are changed into one another and are brought into fellowship with one another by love, without which there can be no such change.

15. He appointed this twofold form, bread and wine, rather than any other, as a further indication of the union and fellowship in this sacrament. For there is no more intimate, deep and inseparable union than the union of the food with him who partakes of it, since the food enters into and is assimilated with his very nature and becomes one with his being. Other unions, effected by means of nails, glue, cords and the like, do not make one indivisible substance of the objects joined together. In the sacrament we become united with Christ, and are made one body with all the saints, so that He concerns Himself for us, acts in our behalf, as though He were what we are—what concerns us concerns Him as much as us, and even more than us; and, on the other hand, that we also concern ourselves for Him, as though we were what He is, as indeed we shall finally be, 1 John 3:2 when we are conformed to His likeness, as St. John says, "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him"; so complete is the fellowship of Christ and all the saints with us. Our sins assail Him, His righteousness protects us; for the union makes all things common, until at

[1] In the Vulgate the Greek word "mystery" is translated by sacramentum. See below, p. 258.

last He completely destroys sin in us and makes us like unto Himself, at the last day. In like manner, by the same love we are to be united with our neighbors, we in them and they in us.

16. In addition to this, He did not appoint this two-fold form by itself, but gave His true natural flesh, in the bread, and His natural and true blood, in the wine, that He might give us a really perfect sacrament or sign. For just as the bread is changed[1] into His true natural body and the wine into His true natural blood, so truly are we also drawn and changed into the spiritual body, that is, into the fellowship of Christ and all saints, and put by this sacrament in possession of all the virtues and mercies of Christ and His saints; as was said above[2] of a citizen who is taken and incorporated into the city and the protection and freedom of the entire community. Therefore He instituted not simply the one form, but the two separate forms, His flesh under the bread, His blood under the wine, to indicate that not only His life and good works, which are represented by His flesh and which He accomplished in His flesh, but also His passion and martyrdom, which are represented by His blood and in which He shed His blood, are all our own, and by being drawn into this fellowship we may use and enjoy them.

17. All this makes it clear that this holy sacrament is naught else than a divine sign, in which Christ and all saints are pledged, granted and imparted, with all their works, sufferings, merits, mercies and possessions, for the comfort and strengthening of all who are in anxiety and sorrow, and are persecuted by the devil, sin, the world, the flesh and every evil; and that to receive the sacrament is nothing else than to desire all this and firmly to believe that it shall be done.

The Third Part of the Sacrament: Faith

There follows the third part of the sacrament, that is faith, on which all depends. For it is not enough to know

[1] Luther still adheres to the doctrine of transubstantiation. But see below, pp. 187 ff.
[2] See p. 11.

what the sacrament is and signifies. It is not enough that you know it is a fellowship and a gracious exchange or blending of our sin and suffering with the righteousness of Christ and His saints; you must also desire it and firmly believe that you have received it. Here the devil and our own nature wage their fiercest fight, that faith may by no means stand firm. There are those who practice their arts and subtleties to such an extent that they ask where the bread remains when it is changed into Christ's flesh, and the wine when it is changed into His blood; also in what manner the whole Christ, His flesh and His blood, can be comprehended in so small a portion of bread and wine. What does it matter? It is enough to know that it is a divine sign, in which Christ's flesh and blood are truly present—how and where, we leave to Him.[1]

18. See to it that you exercise and strengthen your faith, so that when you are sorrowful or your sins afflict you and you go to the sacrament or hear mass, you do so with a hearty desire for this sacrament and for what it means, and doubt not that you have what the sacrament signifies, that is, that you are certain Christ and all His saints come to you bringing all their virtues, sufferings and mercies, to live, work, suffer and die with you, and be wholly yours, to have all things in common with you. If you will exercise and strengthen this faith, you will experience what a rich and joyous wedding-supper and festival your God has prepared upon the altar for you. Then you will understand
Esth. 1:5 what the great feast of King Ahasuerus signifies, you will see what that wedding is for which God has slain His oxen
Matt. 22:2 ff. and fatlings, as it is written in the Gospel, and your heart will grow right free and confident, strong and courageous, against all enemies. For who will fear any calamity if he is sure that Christ and all His saints are with Him and share all things, evil or good, in common with him? So we
Acts 2:46 f. read that the disciples of Christ broke this bread and ate

[1] Cf. below, p. 192.

with great gladness of heart. Since, then, this work is so great that our insignificant souls dare not desire it, to say nothing of hoping for or expecting it, it is necessary and profitable to go often to the sacrament, or at least in the daily mass to exercise and strengthen this faith, on which all depends and for the sake of which it was instituted. For if you doubt[1] you do God the greatest dishonor and regard Him as unfaithful and a liar. If you cannot believe, pray for faith, as was said above in the other treatise.[2]

19. See to it also that you make yourself a fellow of every man and by no means exclude any one in hatred or anger; for this sacrament of fellowship, love and unity cannot tolerate discord and dissension. You must let the infirmities and needs of others burden your heart, as though they were your own, and offer them your strength, as though it were their own, as Christ does for you in the sacrament. That is what we mean by being changed into one another through love, out of many particles becoming one bread and drink, giving up one's own form and taking one that belongs to all.[3]

For this reason slanderers and those who wickedly judge and despise others cannot but receive death in the sacrament, as St. Paul writes. For they do not unto their neighbor what they seek from Christ and what the sacrament indicates; they wish them no good, have no sympathy with them, do not receive them as they desire to be received by Christ, and then fall into such blindness that they do not know what else to do in this sacrament except to fear and honor Christ in the sacrament with their prayers and devotion. When they have done this they think they have done their whole duty, although Christ has given His body

1 Cor. 11:29

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[1] See Luther's explanation of the First Commandment in the Catechisms. Also the answer to the last question in Part V, Small Catechism.

[2] Treatise on Penance (Weimer Ed., II, 721), where Luther exhorts the troubled conscience to pray with the father of the lunatic boy, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief," and with the Apostles, "Lord, increase our faith."

[3] Cf. above, p. 17.

for this purpose, that the significance of the sacrament, that is, fellowship and mutual love, may be put into practice, and His own natural body be less regarded than His spiritual body,[1] which is the fellowship of His saints. What concerns Him most, especially in this sacrament, is that faith in the fellowship with Him and with His saints may be rightly exercised and become strong in us, and that we, in accordance with it, may rightly exercise our fellowship with one another. This purpose of Christ they do not perceive and, in their devoutness, they daily say and hear mass, and remain every day the same; nay, become worse daily, and mark it not.

Therefore take heed; it is more needful that you discern the spiritual than that you discern the natural body of Christ, and faith in the spiritual is more needful than faith in the natural. For the natural without the spiritual profiteth us nothing in this sacrament; a change[2] must occur and manifest itself through love.

20. There are many who, regardless of this change of love and faith, rely upon the fact that the mass or the sacrament is, as they say, opus gratum opere operato, that is, a work which of itself pleases God, even though they who perform it do not please Him. From this they conclude that, however unworthily masses are said, it is none the less a good thing to have many masses, since the harm comes to those who say or use them unworthily. I grant every one his opinion, but such fables please me not. For, if you desire to speak thus, there is no creature nor work
Gen. 1:31 that does not of itself please God, as is written, "God saw all His works and they pleased Him." What good can result therefrom, if one misuse bread, wine, gold, and every good creature, though of themselves they are pleasing to God? Nay, condemnation is the result. So too, here: the more precious the sacrament, the greater the harm which comes upon the whole congregation from its misuse. For it was

[1] The Church.
[2] A transubstantiation in the communicant.

not instituted for its own sake, that it might please God, but for our sake, that we might use it rightly, exercise our faith by it, and by it become pleasing to God. If it is merely an opus operatum,[1] it works only harm; it must become an opus operantis.[2] Just as bread and wine work only harm if they are not used, no matter how much they please God of themselves; so it is not enough that the sacrament be prepared (that is, opus operatum), it must also be used in faith (that is, opus operantis). And we must take heed lest with such dangerous glosses our minds be turned away from the sacrament's power and virtue, and faith perish entirely through such false security in the outwardly completed sacrament.

All this results because they give heed in this sacrament to Christ's natural body more than to the fellowship, the spiritual body. Christ on the cross was also a completed work,[3] which was well-pleasing to God; but the Jews unto this day have found it a stumbling block, for the reason that they did not make of it a work that must be used in faith.[4] See to it, then, that the sacrament be for you an opus operantis, that is, a work that is made use of, and that it be well-pleasing to God, not because of what it is in itself, but because of your faith and your right use of it. The Word of God is also of itself pleasing to God, but it is harmful to me when it does not please God also within me. In short, such expressions as opus operatum and opus operantis are nothing but useless words of men, more of a hindrance than a help. And who could tell all the abominable abuses and misbeliefs which daily multiply about this blessed sacrament, although some of them are so spiritual and holy that they might almost lead an angel astray? Briefly, whoever would understand the abuses need only keep before him the aforesaid use and

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[1] A work that is done without reference to the doer of it.
[2] A work considered with reference to the doer of it.
[3] An opus operatum.
[4] An opus operantis.

faith of this sacrament; namely, that there must be a sorrowing, hungry soul, desiring heartily the love, help, and support of the entire communion of Christ and of all saints, doubting not that in faith it obtains them, and then, on the other hand, making itself one with everyone. Whoever does not thus direct and order the hearing or reading of masses and the reception of the sacrament, errs and does not use this sacrament to his salvation. For this reason also the world is overwhelmed with pestilences, wars and other horrible plagues,[1] since with our many masses we only call upon us the more disfavor.

21. We see now how necessary this sacrament is for those who must face death, or other dangers of body and soul, since they are not left alone in them, but are strengthened in the communion of Christ and all saints. Therefore also Christ instituted it and gave it to His disciples in their extreme need and danger. Since we are all daily surrounded by all kinds of danger, and must at last die, we should humbly and heartily and with all our powers thank the God of all mercy for giving us a gracious sign, by which, if we hold fast thereto by faith, He leads and draws us through death and every danger to Himself, to Christ, and to all saints.

Therefore it is also profitable and necessary that the love and fellowship of Christ and all saints be hidden, invisible and spiritual, and that only a bodily, visible and outward sign of it be given us. For were this love, fellowship and help known to all, like the temporal fellowship of men, we should not be strengthened nor trained thereby to put our trust in the invisible and eternal things, or to desire them, but should much rather be trained to put our trust only in the temporal, visible things and to become so accustomed to them as to be unwilling to let them go and to follow God onward; we should thus be prevented from ever coming to Him, if we followed God only so far as visible and tangible things led us. For everything of time and sense must fall

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. 11 : 30.

away, and we must learn to do without them, if we are to come to God.

Therefore the mass and this sacrament are a sign by which we train and accustom ourselves to let go all visible love, help, and comfort, and to trust in Christ and in the invisible love, help, and comfort of His saints. For death takes away everything visible, and separates us from men and temporal things; hence, to meet death, we must have the help of the invisible and eternal things; and these are indicated to us in the sacrament and sign, to which we cling by faith, until we attain to them also by sight.

Thus the sacrament is for us a ford, a bridge, a door, a ship, and a litter, in which and by which we pass from this world into eternal life. Therefore all depends on faith. He who does not believe is like one who must cross the sea, but is so timid that he does not trust the ship; and so he must remain and never be saved, because he does not embark and cross over. This is due to our dependence on the senses and to our untried faith which shrinks from the passage across the Jordan of death—the devil also cruelly helps toward this.

22. This was indicated of old in Joshua iii. After the children of Israel had gone dry-shod through the Red Sea, a type of baptism, they went through Jordan in like manner; but the priests stood with the ark in Jordan, and the water below them flowed by, while that above them stood upon a heap, a type of this sacrament. The priests carry and uphold the ark in Jordan when in the hour of our death or peril they preach and administer to us this sacrament, Christ, and the fellowship of all saints. If we believe, the waters below us depart, that is, the temporal, visible things harm us not, but flee from us. And those above us stand up high, as though they would overwhelm us; these are the horrors and apparitions of the other world, which at the hour of death terrify us. If, however, we pay no heed to them, and pass on with a firm faith, we shall enter into eternal life dry-shod and unharmed.

Josh. 3:7 ff.

We have, therefore, two principal sacraments in the church, baptism and the bread. Baptism leads us into a new life on earth; the bread guides us through death into eternal life. And the two are typified by the Red Sea and the Jordan, and by the two lands, one beyond and one on this side the Jordan. Therefore our Lord said at the Last Supper: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." So entirely is this sacrament intended and ordained to strengthen us against death, and to give us entrance into eternal life.

Matt. 26:29

Finally, the blessing of this sacrament is fellowship and love, by which we are strengthened against death and all evil. This fellowship is twofold: on the one hand we partake of Christ and all saints, on the other hand we permit all Christians to be partakers of us, in whatever way they and we are able; so that by this sacrament all self-seeking love is uprooted and gives place to love which seeks the common good of all, and through this mutual love there is one bread, one drink, one body, one community,—that is the true union of Christian brethren. Now let us see how the pretentious brotherhoods, of which there are now so many, measure up to this and resemble it.

CONCERNING THE BROTHERHOODS.[1]

1. First, let us consider the evil practices of the brotherhoods. One of these is their gluttony and drunkenness,—one or more masses are held,[2] afterward the entire day and night, and other days besides, are given over to the devil, and they do only what displeases God. Such mad reveling has been introduced by the evil spirit, and is called a brotherhood, whereas it is rather a debauch and altogether a heathenish, nay, swinish mode of life. There would far better be no brotherhoods in the world than that such an

[1] Sodalities; see Introduction, p. 8, and below, pp. 137 f.
[2] On festival days of the order and on saints' days.

abomination should be permitted. Temporal lords and cities should unite with the clergy in abolishing it. For God, the saints, and all Christians are greatly dishonored thereby, and the divine services and feast-days made a sport for the devil. Saints' days should be kept and hallowed with good works; and the brotherhood should also be a special treasury of good works; instead it has become a treasury of beer money. What have the names of Our Lady, of St. Anne, St. Sebastian,[1] or other saints to do with your brotherhoods, in which you have nothing but gluttony, drunkenness, squandering of money, howling, yelling, chattering, dancing and wasting of time? If a sow were made the patron saint of such a brotherhood she would not consent. Why then do they afflict the dear saints so sorely by taking their names in vain in such shameful practices and sins, and by dishonoring and blaspheming the brotherhoods named after them with such evil practices? Woe unto them who do and permit this!

2. If men desire to maintain a brotherhood, they should gather provisions, and feed and serve a tableful or two of poor people, for the sake of God; the day previous they should fast, and on the feast-day remain sober, and pass the time in prayer and other good works. Then God and His saints would be truly honored; this would lead to better conditions, and a good example would be given others. Or they should gather the money which they intended to squander for drink and form a common treasury, each trade[2] by itself, so that needy fellow-workmen might be assisted, or be lent money, or a young couple of that trade might be

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[1] The Carmelites are supposed to have been the first to organize sodalities, having organized in the fourteenth century the Sodality of Our Lady of Carmel. St. Anne was the mother of the Holy Virgin. Her sodalities were, as Kolde says, epidemic in 1520. Luther's appeal to St. Anne in the thunderstorm is well known (Comp. KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, I, 55). There was a sodality of St. Anne, besides one of St. Augustine and one of St. Catherine, in the monastery at Erfurt in Luther's day. St. Sebastian was a martyr of the fourteenth century. His day is January 20. Comp. Arts. Anna, Sebastian and Bruderschaften in Prot. Realencyk., I, 552 ff; II, 534 ff.

[2] A trades' guild brotherhood.

fitted out respectably from the common treasury: these would be true works of brotherhood, which would make God and His saints look with pleasure upon the brotherhoods, of which they would then gladly be the patrons. But where they are unwilling to do this, and follow after the old mummery, I admonish that it be not done on the saints' days, nor in the name of the saints or of the brotherhood. Let them take some other weekday and leave off the names of the saints and of their brotherhoods, lest the saints at some time mark it with disapproval. Although there is no day which is not dishonored by such doings, at least the festivals and the names of the saints should be spared. For such brotherhoods call themselves brotherhoods of the saints while they do the work of the devil.

3. Another evil feature of the brotherhoods is of a spiritual nature; it is a false opinion of themselves, in that they think their brotherhood is to be a benefit to no one but to themselves,—to those who are members and are on the roll or contribute. This damnably wicked opinion is an even worse evil than the first, and is one of the reasons why God has brought it about that the brotherhoods are becoming such a mockery and blasphemy of God through gluttony, drunkenness and the like. For there they learn to seek their own good, to love themselves, to be faithful only to one another, to despise others, to think themselves better than others and presume to stand higher before God than others. And thus perishes the communion of saints, the Christian love, and the true brotherhood, established in the holy sacrament. Thus a selfish love grows in them; that is, by these many external work-brotherhoods they oppose and destroy the one, inner, spiritual, essential, common brotherhood of all saints.

Ps. 18:26 When God sees this perverted state of affairs, He perverts it still more, as is written in Psalm xviii,[1] "With the perverse thou wilt be perverted"; and He brings it to pass

[1] Douay Version, based on Vulgate, from which Luther quotes.

that they make themselves and their brotherhoods a mockery and a disgrace, and He casts them out from the common brotherhood of saints, which they oppose and do not make common cause with, into their brotherhood of gluttony, drunkenness and unchastity, so that they, who have neither sought nor thought of anything more than their own, may find their own; and then He blinds them that they do not recognize it as an abomination and disgrace, but adorn their unseemliness with the names of saints, as though they were doing right; beyond this He lets some fall into so deep an abyss that they openly boast and say whoever is in their brotherhood cannot be condemned, as though baptism and the sacrament, instituted by God Himself, were of less worth and were less certain than that which they have thought out with their darkened minds. Therefore their God will dishonor and blind those who, with their mad conduct and the swinish practices of their brotherhoods, mock and blaspheme His feasts, His name, and His saints, to the injury of the common Christian brotherhood, which flowed from the wounds of Christ.

4. Therefore, for the right understanding and use of the brotherhoods, one must learn to distinguish rightly between brotherhoods. The first is the divine, the heavenly, the noblest, which surpasses all others, as gold surpasses copper or lead—the fellowship of all saints, of which we spoke above.[1] In this we are all brothers and sisters, so closely united that a closer relationship cannot be conceived, for here we have one baptism, one Christ, one sacrament, one food, one Gospel, one faith, one Spirit, one spiritual body, and each is a member of the other; no other brotherhood is so close. For natural brothers are, to be sure, brothers of one flesh and blood, of one heritage and home, but they must separate and join themselves to others' blood and heritage.[2] Organized brotherhoods have one roll, one mass, one kind of good works, one festival day, one

[1] See above, p. 10.
[2] I. e., in marriage.

treasury, and, as things are now, their common beer, common feast and common debauch, but none of these binds men so closely together as to produce one spirit, for that is done by Christ's brotherhood alone.

Since, then, the greater, broader and more embracing Christ's brotherhood is, the better it is, therefore all other brotherhoods should be so conducted as to keep this first and noblest brotherhood constantly before their eyes, to regard it alone as great, and with all their works to seek nothing for themselves, but do them for God's sake, to entreat God that He keep and prosper this Christian fellowship and brotherhood from day to day. Hence, when a brotherhood is formed, they should let it be seen that its members outstrip other persons in order to do Christianity some special service with their prayers, fastings, alms and good works, and not in order to seek selfish profit or reward, nor to exclude others, but to serve as the free servants of the whole community of Christians.

If men had such a correct conception, God would restore good order, so that the brotherhoods might not be brought to shame by debauchery. Then God's blessing would follow, so that a general fund might be gathered, with which other men also might be given material aid; then the spiritual and bodily works of the brotherhoods would be done in their proper order. Whoever will not follow this method in his brotherhood I advise to flee from it and let the brotherhood alone; it will do him harm in body and soul.

But if you say, If the brotherhood is not to give me some special advantage, of what use is it to me? I answer: If you are seeking some special advantage, how can the brotherhood or sisterhood help you? Serve the community and other men by it, as is the nature of love, and you will have your reward for this love without any effort and desire on your part. But if you deem the service and reward of love too small, it is evidence that yours is a perverted brotherhood. Love serves freely and for nothing, therefore God also gives again to it every blessing freely and for nothing.

Since, then, everything must be done in love, if it is to please God at all, the brotherhood must also be a brotherhood in love. It is the nature, however, of that which is done in love not to seek its own, nor its own profit, but that of others, and, above all, that of the community.

5. To return once more to the sacrament; since the Christian fellowship also is at present in a bad way, as never before, and daily grows worse, especially among the rulers, and all places are full of sin and shame, you should not consider how many masses are said, or how often the sacrament is celebrated, for this will make things worse rather than better,—but how much you and others increase in that which the sacrament signifies and in the faith it demands,—for therein alone lies improvement; and the more you find yourself being incorporated into Christ and into the fellowship of His saints, the better it is with you,—that is, if you find that you are becoming strong in the confidence of Christ and of His dear saints, and are certain that they love you and stand by you in all the trials of life and in death, and that you in turn take to heart the shortcomings and lapses of all Christians and of the whole Church, that your love goes out to everyone, and that you desire to help everyone, to hate no one, to suffer with all and pray for them: then will the work of the sacrament proceed aright, then you will often weep, lament and mourn for the wretched condition of Christendom to-day. If, however, you find no such confidence in Christ and His saints, and the needs of the Church and of every fellowman do not trouble or move you, then beware of all other good works, if in doing them you think you are godly and will be saved. Be assured they are only hypocrisy, sham and deceit, for they are without love and fellowship, and without these nothing is good. For the sum of it all is, Plenitudo legis est dilectio, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Amen. Rom. 13:10

A TREATISE

CONCERNING

THE BAN

1520

41631

INTRODUCTION

THE ban, or excommunication, is the correlative of communion. Our conception of excommunication depends then, of course, upon our view of what constitutes communion. Luther gives us his view of communion in the preceding Treatise concerning the Blessed Sacrament. From the premise there laid down it follows that excommunication, or the ban, excludes only from external membership in the Church, but cannot really separate a man from the Church if he is in personal fellowship with his Lord.[1] Sin and unbelief cause this separation from Him, and the real ban, therefore, is put into effect not by the Church, but by the man himself when he sins against God. The ban of the Church cannot even deprive one of the Sacrament, but only of the outward use of it, for it can still be partaken of spiritually. This whole position, of course, is fatal to the Roman Catholic conception of the Church, and we do not wonder that it was vigorously opposed by the hierarchy.

Of like significance is Luther's advocacy of the separation of the temporal and spiritual powers, practically of Church and State,—the position which he develops later in the Open Letter to the Nobility.

But in this treatise, again, Luther shows himself to be anything but the immoral monster his vilifiers have tried to make of him. He is again the man of conscience—will his critics say, "of oversensitive conscience"? Thank God that there were some sensitive consciences in an almost conscienceless age! Luther fears sin more than the ban, and sin has for him more than an ecclesiastical meaning. Sin is not primarily an act against the Church, but an offence against God. This the ban is to teach; it is to be the symbol of God's wrath against sin and it is to be used by the Church only remedially and in love. When so used it becomes the chastening rod of the dear Mother Church, provided it be accepted and borne in this spirit.

Why, then, did not Luther bear his own ban in this way? The justification for his subsequent conduct is to be found in two brief but important conditional clauses in this treatise. "God," he says, "cannot and will not permit authority to be wantonly and impudently resisted, when it does not force us to do what is against God or His commandments."[2] Again he says, "When unjustly put under the ban we should be very careful not to do, omit, say or withhold that on account

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[1] See below, p. 37.
[2] See below, p. 50.

of which we are under the ban, unless we cannot do so without sin and without injury to our neighbor."[1] God and his neighbor were for Luther the factors which made it necessary for him to speak and act, when for selfish reasons he would often rather have remained passive.

The inception of our treatise is to be found in a sermon preached in Wittenberg in the spring of 1518. Luther's pastoral concern for his people made it necessary for him to speak on this subject in order to quiet the consciences both embittered and distressed by the wanton and unjust use of the power of excommunication. Added to this must have been his own personal interest in the ban certain to fall on him. In a letter to Link,[2] dated July 10, 1518, he speaks of having preached a sermon on the power of the ban which produced general consternation and fear that the fire enkindled by the XCV Theses would start afresh. He had desired a public disputation on the subject, but the Bishop of Brandenburg persuaded him to defer the matter. Under date of September 1st, Luther writes Staupitz[3] that because his sermon had been misrepresented and spread by unfriendly spies it became necessary for him to publish it. It appeared in August after Luther's summons to Rome, under the title De Virtute Excommunicationis. Our treatise is an elaboration in popular form of this Latin treatise of 1518.

The Grünenberg text given in CLEMEN, Vol. I, which we have followed in most cases, is dated 1520, and must have appeared in its original edition at the end of 1519 or the beginning of 1520.

The text of the treatise is found in the following editions:

Weimar Ed., vol. vi, 63; Erlangen Ed., vol. xxvii, 51; Walch Ed., vol. xix, 1089; St. Louis Ed., vol. xix, 884; Clemen, vol. i, 213; Berlin Ed., vol. iii, 291.

J. J. SCHINDEL.

ALLENTOWN, PA.

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[1] See below, p. 51.

[2] See ENDERS, I, No. 84. SMITH. Luther's Correspondence, I, No. 69.

[3] See ENDERS, I, No. 90. SMITH, Luther's Correspondence, I, No. 77.

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE BAN

1520

JESUS

1. We have seen[1] that the sacrament of the holy body of Christ is a sign of the communion of all saints, therefore it becomes necessary to know also what the ban is which is employed in the Church by the power of the spiritual estate. For its chief and peculiar function and power is to deprive guilty Christians of the holy sacrament and forbid it to them. Therefore the one cannot be understood apart from the other, because the one is the opposite of the other; for the Latin word c o m m u n i o means fellowship, and thus do the learned designate the Holy Sacrament. Its opposite is the word e x c o m m u n i c a t i o, which means exclusion from this fellowship, and so the learned term the ban.

2. There is a twofold fellowship, corresponding to the two things in the sacrament, the sign and the thing signified, as was said in the treatise.[2] The first is an inner, spiritual and invisible fellowship of the heart, by which one is incorporated by true faith, hope and love in the fellowship of Christ and of all the saints, signified and bestowed in the sacrament; and this is the effect and virtue of the sacrament. This fellowship can neither be given nor taken away by any one, be he bishop, pope, or angel or any creature. God alone through His Holy Spirit must pour it into the heart of the one who believes in the sacrament, as was said

[1] In the preceding treatise on the **Blessed Sacrament.**
[2] See above, p. 10.

in the treatise.[1] This fellowship no ban can touch or affect, but only the unbelief or sin of the person himself; by these he can excommunicate himself, and thus separate himself from the grace, life and salvation of the fellowship. This St. Paul proves in Romans viii: "Who shall separate us from the love of God? Can anguish or need, or hunger or poverty, or danger or persecution, or shedding of blood? Nay, I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor angelic hosts, neither things present nor things to come, naught that is mighty on the earth, neither height nor depth nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord." And St. Peter says: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

Rom. 8:35, 38

1 Peter 3:13

3. The second kind of fellowship is an outward, bodily and visible fellowship, by which one is admitted to the Holy Sacrament and receives and partakes of it together with others. From this fellowship or communion bishop and pope can exclude one, and forbid it to him on account of his sin, and that is called putting him under the ban. This ban was much in vogue of old, and is now known as the lesser ban. For the ban goes beyond this and forbids even burial, selling, trading, all association and fellowship with men, finally, as they say, even fire and water,[2] and this is known as the greater ban.

Not satisfied with this, there are some who go still farther and use the temporal powers against those under the ban, to coerce them with sword, fire, and war.[3] These, however, are new inventions, rather than the real meaning of Scripture. To wield the temporal sword belongs to the emperor, to kings, to princes, and to the rulers of this world, and by no means to the spiritual estate,[4] whose sword is not to be

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[1] See above, p. 18.

[2] I. e., the necessaries of life.

[3] E. g., the crusades against heretics, and the inquisition of the thirteenth century. Luther's statement that to burn heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit was condemned in the Bull Exsurge Domine, of July 15, 1520.

[4] Cf. p. 53.

of iron, but the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word and commandment of God, as St. Paul says. Eph. 6:17

4. This external ban, both the lesser and the greater, was instituted by Christ when He said in Matthew xviii: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word or transaction may be established. If he will not hear them, then tell it unto the whole congregation, the Church. If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee a heathen man and a publican." Matt. 18:15 ff.

Likewise St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians v: "If any man among you be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one keep not company, neither eat with him." Again he says in II Thessalonians iii: "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Again, John says in his second Epistle: "If any one come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, and he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." 1 Cor. 5:11 2 Thess. 3:14 2 John 10

From all these sayings we learn how the ban is to be used. First, we should seek neither vengeance nor our own profit, as is at present the disgraceful practice everywhere, but only the correction of our neighbor. Second, the penalty should stop short of his death or destruction; for St. Paul limits the purpose of the ban to the correction of our neighbor, that he be put to shame when no one associates with him, and he adds in II Thessalonians iii: "Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." But now the ruthless tyrants deal with men as though they would cast them down to hell, and do not in any wise seek their correction. 2 Thess. 3:15

5. It may often happen that a person under the ban is deprived of the holy sacrament, and also of burial, and is

nevertheless inwardly[1] secure and blessed in the fellowship of Christ and of all saints, signified in the sacrament. On the other hand, there are many who are not under the outward ban and who freely partake of the sacrament, but are nevertheless inwardly quite estranged and excommunicated from the fellowship of Christ; even though they be buried under the high altar in a golden pall with much pomp and singing and tolling of bells. Therefore, no one is to be judged, even if he be under the ban, especially if he has not been put under the ban for heresy or sin, but for the purpose of correction. For to put men under the ban for the sake of money or other temporal considerations is a new invention, of which the apostles and Christ knew nothing.

6. To put under the ban is not, as some think, to deliver a soul to Satan and deprive it of the intercession and of all the good works[2] of the Church. For where the true faith and love of God remain in the heart, there remains a real participation in all the possessions and intercessions of the Church, together with all the benefits of the sacrament, since the ban is and can be nothing else than exclusion from the external sacrament or from association with men. If I were cast into prison I would, of course, be deprived of the outward companionship of my friends, and yet not be deprived of their favor and friendship; so he that is put under the ban must relinquish the sacrament and association with men, but is not on that account cut off from their love, intercession and good works.

7. It is true that the ban, when it is rightly and deservedly applied, is a sign, an admonition and a chastisement, whereby the one under the ban should recognize that he himself has delivered his soul unto Satan by his transgression and sin, and has deprived himself of the fellowship of all the saints and of Christ. For by the penalty of the ban our mother, the holy Church, would show her dear son the awful consequences of sin and thereby bring him back from

[1] Cf. p. 10.
[2] See Vol. I, pp. 33, 163 ff.

the devil to God. When an earthly mother rebukes and chastises her erring son, she does not give him over to the hangman or to the wolves, nor make a knave of him, but she restrains him and shows him by her chastisement that he is in danger of the hangman, and thus keeps him at home in his father's house. In the same way, when the spiritual power puts any one under the ban, it should be in this spirit: "Behold, thou has done this or that, whereby thou hast delivered thy soul unto the devil, deserved God's wrath, and deprived thyself of all Christian fellowship; thou art fallen under the inward spiritual ban in the sight of God and art unwilling to cease or to return. So then, I put thee also outwardly under the ban in the sight of men, and to thy shame I deprive thee of the sacrament and of fellowship with men, until thou come to thyself and bring back thy soul."

8. Let every bishop, provost or official,[1] who uses the ban for any other purpose, take heed lest he put himself under the everlasting ban from which neither God nor any creature shall deliver him. There are none to whom the ban is more harmful and dangerous than those who apply it, even though it be laid quite justly and only on account of wrongdoing, for the reason that they seldom if ever have this object in view. Besides they go about it without fear and do not consider how perchance they themselves may be more worthy of a hundred bans in the sight of God, as the Gospel records of the servant who owed his Lord ten thousand pounds and yet would not have patience with his fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence. What will become of these miserable taskmasters, who for the sake of money have brought things to such a pass with their bans, often violently and unjustly imposed, that Turks and heathen have an easier life than Christians? It is very evident that many of them are under the ban in the sight of God, and are deprived of the blessing of the sacrament and of

Matt. 18:24, 28

[1] The officials were officers of the bishops' courts; see also below, p. 103.

inward, spiritual fellowship, although they do nothing day and night but cite others to appear, harass them and put them under the ban, and deprive of the external sacrament those who are a thousandfold better inwardly and in the sight of God and are living in the spiritual fellowship of the sacrament. O miserable business! O terrible existence maintained by this abominable trade! I am not sure whether such publicans and officials were wolves before becoming officials or whether they are on the way to becoming wolves; their work is certainly wolves' work.

9. From this there follows the truth that the ban of itself ruins, condemns or harms no one, but seeks and finds the ruined and condemned soul for the purpose of bringing it back. For all chastisement is for the correction of sin; the ban is simply a chastisement and motherly correction; therefore it makes no one worse or more sinful, but is ordained solely to restore the inward spiritual fellowship when justly laid, or to deepen it when unjustly imposed. This is
2 Cor. 13:10 proved by St. Paul when he says in II Corinthians xiii: "This I write to you according to the power which the Lord hath given me, to edification and not to destruction." And thus, when he rebukes him who had taken his step-mother to
1 Cor. 5:5 wife, he says in I Corinthians v: "I together with you deliver him unto the devil for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved at the last day." Thus also in the
2 Thess. 3:15 passage quoted above he said: "We should not count him who is under the ban as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother, in order that he may be put to shame and not be lost." Nay, even Christ Himself, as man, had not the power to cut off and deliver a single soul to the devil, as He says in
John 6: 37, 39 John vi: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out, and this is the will of My Father Who sent Me, that I should not destroy or lose what He giveth Me." Again He
Luke 9:56 says: "The Son of Man is not come to destroy, but to save men's souls." If Christ Himself and all the apostles had no other power than to help souls, and have left behind them no other power in the Church, how dare the blind tyrants

presume and boast in their presumption that they have power to curse, to condemn and to destroy, which power is even denied them by their own canon law; for in the Liber Sextus,[1] which treats of the sentence of excommunication, we read: "Since the ban is a medicine and not a poison, only a discipline, not a destructive uprooting, in so far as the one subjected to it does not despise it: therefore let every spiritual judge give diligence to prove himself one who seeks by the ban naught but to correct and to cure."

10. From the above passage it is evident that the ban, when it is not despised, is wholesome and harmless, and not fatal to the soul, as certain timid and dejected consciences, frightened by the outrageous abuses of some, imagine; although in apostolic times it was able to deliver the body to the devil and to death,[2] as indeed it might still be, if the judges would wield the ban, not in the abuse of power, but in humble faith and love, for the correction of their neighbor. It follows further that the ban brings greater danger and terror to those who apply it and are not careful to seek only the correction and salvation of those under the ban, according to the words of the above passage.[3] For the ban can be nothing else than a kind, motherly scourge applied to the body and temporal possessions, by which no one is cast into hell, but rather drawn out of it, and freed from condemnation unto salvation. Therefore we should not only endure it without impatience, but receive it with all joy and reverence. But for the tyrants, who seek therein nothing else than power, awe and gain for themselves, the ban must be a terrible injury, because they pervert it and its purpose, turn the medicine into a poison, and seek only to become a terror to a frightened people; of correction they never think. For this they will have to give an awful reckoning —woe unto them!

11. They have devised a saying, to wit: "Our ban must

[1] In VIto, lib. v, tit. xi, c. 1, Cum medicinalis.
[2] According to Luther's interpretation of 1 Cor. 5 : 5. Cf. also Acts 5 : 5.
[3] The passage quoted from the canon law.

be feared, right or wrong." With this saying they insolently comfort themselves, swell their chests and puff themselves up like adders, and almost dare to defy heaven and to threaten the whole world; with this bugaboo they have made a deep and mighty impression, imagining that there is more in these words than there really is. Therefore we would explain them more fully and prick this bladder, which with its three peas makes such a frightful noise.

Now, it is true, the ban must be feared and not be despised, whether it be just or unjust. But why apply this only to the ban, which is a motherly chastening, and not to all the other and greater penalties and tribulations as well? For what great thing have you done for the ban by saying it must be feared? Must we not also fear when we are sick, poor, slandered, despised, or deprived of goods, income or justice, nay, when the Turk and other enemies attack or afflict us? For all these and other adversities, whether deserved or undeserved, we should fear, suffer and endure, and in all things conduct ourselves as though we but received our
Luke 6:30 deserts, as the Lord teaches: "Of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." Why are you not also afraid, dear tyrant, when you suffer injustice, when your income is refused, your property stolen, your rights denied, and why do you not think that you should endure these things in fear, whether they be right or wrong? Do you think that others are commanded to endure your power in fear, whether right or wrong, and that you are free from this commandment and need not endure violence or wrong in fear? You will learn that you also are human and under the same law with which you threaten others, puffing yourself up in your folly.

12. What perversity! The spiritual powers come along with their ban and say it should be feared and endured, whether right or wrong. But if they are subjected to violence and injustice they will not endure it to the extent of a single heller, but without any fear at all, cast up the accounts in their favor and demand what is theirs. Thus

they withdraw themselves from God's commandment, in keeping which they, most of all, should be an example to others. For if it is true that pope, bishop and the whole spiritual estate may without fear resist injustice, injury and contempt in their own interest, then it is also true that the ban may be resisted and be repelled, as vigorously as they seek their interest. There is no distinction in God's commandment, it concerns every one alike. But may God forbid that! We are to bear both the ban and whatever tribulation may befall us in fear, as the Gospel teaches. Therefore, if any one wrong you or take your income, and you do not endure it in fear, but would frighten him with the ban,[1] especially when you are seeking not his improvement, but your own benefit or self-will, take heed, you are already worse than he. For you intend to draw yourself out of fear and to draw him in, which you have no right to do, and compel him to keep the Gospel which you tear to pieces. How will you be able to stand before God? Therefore when they say, "Our ban must be feared, right or wrong," we reply: "Yes, that is true, but it is also true that your unjust ban harms no one but yourselves, and harms you in body and soul. And the just ban harms you more than it harms me. Therefore you should also endure your injury in fear, be it right or wrong, and if you glory over me because of the ban I will glory over you because of your suffering. If a criminal took my coat and said: 'You should endure it in fear and humility,' I would say, 'I will; not for the sake of your theft, which harms me not, but for the sake of Christ's commandment.' Just so I fear your ban, not for the ban's sake (it does not harm me, but rather yourself), but for the sake of Christ's commandment." Matt. 5:40

13. Though it is true that the ban must be feared, whether it be right or wrong, yet those who lay the ban are always in greater danger than those on whom it is laid. He who is banned is in no danger but that of despising the ban and

[1] For instances see the Gravamina of the German Nation (1521), Wrede, Deutsche Reichstagsakten, II, 685.

not bearing it, whether it be right or wrong. But he who bans is in danger, in the first place, of not enduring injustice in fear; in the second place, of avenging himself through the ban without any fear; in the third place, of not seeking, with singleness of purpose, his sinful neighbor's correction by means of the ban. This is evident because he despises his own sin and that of others, and only attacks the man who injures him, all of which is contrary to the Gospel. Hence it comes that by means of their dreadful perverseness those who use the ban nowadays pick up the spoon and tread in the dish;[1] they put others under the external ban and put themselves under condemnation inwardly; in addition, they become so blinded that they boast how greatly their external ban is to be feared, and inwardly they condemn themselves, and rejoice boldly and without fear like fools and madmen. For this reason I am sure that the Holy Spirit did not invent the saying, Our ban must be feared, right or wrong. It does not become a Christian, not to say one in the spiritual estate,[2] to wrong another, much less to lord it over him and boast that this injustice must be feared. It behooves me to say, Thy injustice makes me tremble; it behooves thee much more to take heed and be in fear lest thou do me wrong and threaten me besides, saying that I must endure it in fear; for thy injustice can harm me only in time, but thee it harms to all eternity. So evil and lamentable are these present times, in which such furious tyrants shamelessly and openly boast of their sin and everlasting hurt (which would be horrible even in Turks and heathen), in order that they may be defiant now and mock at the misfortunes of those who suffer, whom they do not seek to correct, but only to inspire with fear and false terror.

In a word, the higher estate is always, with all its works, in greater danger than the lower estate, and where the lower estate must needs be in fear once, there the higher estate needs be in fear ten times over. On this account those who

[1] Thiele, Luthers Sprichwörtersammlung, No. 276.
[2] I. e., a cleric.

exercise the ban have no reason to lord it over those who are under the ban or to deal arrogantly with them, but all the more reason to weep for themselves. For God's judgment will not be pronounced on the lowly, but on the mighty, as the wise man says. Wisdom 6:8 f.

14. It were indeed better if Christians were taught to love the ban rather than to fear it,[1] as we are taught by Christ to love chastisement, pain and even death, and not to fear them. But these prattlers speak only of fear in the ban, though they teach that all other chastisements and misfortunes are to be borne cheerfully. Whereby they betray their blind and cursed purpose, which is to rule by force over the people of Christ, and as it were to take the free Christian Church captive in fear. Therefore let us learn what is our chief duty with respect to the ban, namely, not to despise it or bear it impatiently, and this for two reasons. First, because the authority of the ban was given by Christ to the holy mother, the Christian Church, that is, to the community of all Christians. Therefore, in this matter we should honor and submit to our dear mother Church and to Christ. For what Christ and the Church do should have our approval, our love and our filial fear. Secondly, because the effect and purpose of the ban is beneficial and salutary and never injurious, if one endures it and does not despise it. To use a homely illustration: When a mother punishes her beloved son, whether he has deserved it or not, she certainly does not do it with evil intent, but it is a maternal, harmless and salutary punishment, if the son bears it patiently. Only when he becomes impatient, and is not influenced by it to leave the wrong or to do the good for the sake of which he is punished, but turns against his mother and despises her, does the punishment begin to do him harm; for then he offends against God, Who has commanded: "Thou shalt honor thy father and mother"; and out of a light, harmless, yea even beneficial Ex. 20:12

[1] This statement also was condemned in the papal bull.

chastisement he makes a terrible wrong and sin, to his everlasting pain and punishment.

15. Thus it happens in our day that certain officials[1] and their associates are murdered, beaten and bound, or are in constant fear of death. Doubtless this would not occur at all, or at least much less frequently, if the people did not hold the wrong opinion that the ban is more harmful than profitable. For this reason they venture everything, and commit such crimes as it were in despair. Although this is terrible, yet by God's dispensation the tyrants get what they deserve, because they conceal the real benefit of the ban from the people, and misuse it, making no effort toward correction, but aiming simply to increase their own power. For although every one ought to endure the ban, they too ought not to despise a poor human being, be he guilty or innocent, as Christ says: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones that believe on Me, for I say unto you that their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Why should they wonder if, in the providence of God, at times their heads are broken and their commands despised, because of the unjust tyrannical ban, since without ceasing they act so insolently against God's commandment? True, there is great wrong on both sides. Yet if the people were taught that the power of the ban is wholesome and necessary and that it is not ordained nor used to their hurt, but to their benefit, the officials would be in less danger, and find greater and readier obedience, nay, greater love, good will and honor among all the people.

Matt. 18:10

16. Therefore the people should be taught in some such way as this: My dear people, let not those who have and use the power of the ban drive you to despair, whether they be pious or evil, whether they do you justice or injustice. The power of the ban cannot harm you, but must always be beneficial to the soul, if only you bear and endure it aright; their abuse of the ban does not hinder its virtue. Or if

[1] The "officials" were the administrators of this discipline, see above, p. 41.

you cannot endure it, then try to escape from it with meekness, not with revenge and retaliation by word or deed. And in all things look not to them, but to the dear mother Church. What difference does it make to you whether she lays her rods of chastisement upon you through pious or through wicked rulers? It is and remains, nevertheless, your dearest mother's most salutary rod. From the beginning of the world it has been so, and will ever remain, that spiritual and temporal power is more often given to the Pilates, Herods, Annases and Caiaphases than to the pious Peters, Pauls and the like, and as in all other estates so in that of government there are always more of the wicked than of the pious. It is not to be supposed or hoped that we shall ever have an entirely pious government, nay, it must come as a pure gift of grace or by special prayer and merit, if good government or a right use of power is to be had at all. For God punishes wicked subjects by wicked rulers, as He says: "I will give children to be their prelates and their rulers Isa. 3:4 shall be childish men, I will take from them every mighty man, the wise, the prudent and the man of war," etc. Since, then, incapable or evil rulers are God's chastisement, and there are so many among us who deserve such chastisement, we must not be surprised if the government wrongs us and abuses its power toward us, nay, we must wonder and thank God when it does not wrong us and do us injustice.

17. Wherefore, since the world is at present overburdened, as it has abundantly deserved to be because of its heinous sins, with young, imprudent and inexperienced rulers, especially in the spiritual estate, so that this age of ours is extraordinarily perilous, we must act very prudently and by all means see to it that we hold the government and all authority in the highest honor, even as Christ honors the authority of Pilate, Herod, Annas, Caiaphas, and of the temporal rulers of His time; we must not permit such grievous abuses and the childish rule of the prelates to move us to despise all authority, so that despite those unworthy persons who

bear rule we may not at the same time despise their authority, but cheerfully bear what it imposes, or refuse to bear it at least with humility and proper respect. For God cannot and will not permit authority to be wantonly and impudently resisted when it does not force us to do what is against God or His commandments,[1] though they themselves do as much as they can against God, or injure us as much as they will. There are some whom He Himself would judge and condemn, and such are those great and powerful tyrants; so too, there are those whom He would help, and such are the oppressed sufferers. Therefore we should yield to this His will and leave the mighty to His sword and judgment, and allow Him to help us, as St. Paul says: "O dearly beloved brethren, neither avenge nor defend yourselves, but rather give place unto the wrath of God, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to Me alone and I will repay each one."

Rom. 12:19

Deut. 32:35

And yet we should humbly tell these prelates (especially should the preachers rebuke them, yet only by showing them from the Word of God) that they are acting against God and show them what He would have them do, and in addition diligently and earnestly pray to God for them; even as Jeremiah wrote to the children of Israel in Babylon that they should zealously pray for the king of Babylon, for his son and for his kingdom, although he had taken them captive, had troubled and slain them and done them all manner of evil.

Baruch 1:11

Jer. 29:7

And we can easily do this if we remember that the ban and all unrighteous authority cannot harm our souls, provided we submit to them, and they must ever be of profit, unless they are despised. So also are the authorities a thousandfold worse in the sight of God than we, and are therefore to be pitied rather than wickedly to be despised. For this reason we are also commanded in the law of Moses that no one shall revile the rulers, be they good or evil, even though they give great occasion. In short, we must have evil

Ex. 22:28

[1] A very important limitation for Luther's position.

or childish rulers,—if it is not the Turk, then it must needs be the Christians. The world is far too wicked to be worthy of good and pious lords, it must have princes who go to war, levy taxes and shed blood, and it must have spiritual tyrants who impoverish and burden it with bulls and letters[1] and laws. This and other chastisements are rather what it has deserved, and to resist them is nothing else than to resist God's chastisement. As humbly as I conduct myself when God sends me a sickness, so humbly should I conduct myself toward the evil government, which the same God also sends me.

18. When we are justly and deservedly put under the ban our chief concern should be to correct the sins of commission and omission which caused the ban, since the ban always is imposed on account of sin (which is far worse than the ban itself), and yet here as elsewhere things are perverted, so that we only consider how much the rod hurts and not why we are punished. Where can you find men to-day who are as much in fear of sinning and provoking God as they are in fear of the ban? Thus it happens that we are more in fear of the wholesome chastisement than of the heinous sins. We must let men think and act thus, because the natural man does not see the spiritual harm in sin as he feels the smarts of chastisement; although the fear of the ban has also been exaggerated by the tyrannous methods and threatenings of the spiritual judges who drive the people to fear punishment more than sin.

When, however, we are unjustly put under the ban, we should be very careful that we in no way do, omit, say or withhold that on account of which we are under the ban (unless we cannot do so without sin and without injury to our neighbor),[2] but rather should we endure the ban in humility, die happily under it, if it cannot be otherwise, and not be terrified, even though we do not receive the sacrament and are buried in unconsecrated ground. The

[1] See Open Letter to the Nobility, below, p. 98.
[2] Again an important limitation.

reason is this: Truth and righteousness belong to the inner, spiritual fellowship[1] and may not be abandoned under penalty of falling under God's eternal ban. Therefore they dare not be surrendered for the sake of the external fellowship, which is immeasurably inferior, nor because of the ban. To receive the sacrament and to be buried in consecrated ground are of too little consequence that for their sake truth and righteousness be neglected. And that no one may think this strange I will go further and say that even he who dies under a just ban is not damned, unless indeed he did not repent of his sin or despised the ban. For sorrow and repentance make all things right, even though his body be exhumed or his ashes cast into the water.[2]

19. The unjust ban then is much more to be desired than either the just ban or the external fellowship. It is a very precious merit in the sight of God, and blessed is he who dies under an unjust ban. God will grant him an eternal crown for the truth's sake, on account of which he is under the ban.
Ps. 109:28 Then let him sing in the words of Psalm cix, "They have cursed me, but Thou hast blessed me." Only let us beware of despising the authorities, and humbly declare our innocence; if this does not avail, then we are free and without guilt in the sight of God. For if we are in duty bound by
Matt. 5:25 the commandment of Christ to agree with our adversary; how much more should we agree with the authority of the Christian Church, be it exercised justly or unjustly, by worthy or unworthy rulers.

An obedient child, though it does not deserve the punishment it receives from its mother, suffers no harm from the unjust chastisement, nay, by its very patience it becomes much dearer and more pleasing to the mother; how much more do we become lovable in God's sight, if at the hands of evil rulers we endure the unmerited punishment of the Church, as our spiritual mother. For the Church remains

[1] See above, p. 41.

[2] The ashes of Hus were cast into the Rhine (1415), and the body of Wyclif was exhumed and cremated and the ashes cast into the water (1427).

our mother because Christ remains Christ, and she is not changed into a step-mother simply because of our evil rulers. Nevertheless, the prelates and bishops and their officials should be temperate and not hastily use the ban, for many bans means nothing else than many laws and commandments, and prescribing many laws is to set many snares for poor souls. And so by numerous ill-advised bans nothing more results than great offence and an occasion for sin, by which the wrath of God is provoked, although the ban was ordained to reconcile Him. And although we are truly bound to obey them, still more are they bound to direct, change and regulate their decree and authority according to our ability and need and for our correction and salvation; for we have shown from St. Paul[1] that power is given not for destruction but for edification. 2 Cor. 13:10

20. The ban should be applied not only to heretics and schismatics, but to all who are guilty of open sin, as we have shown above from St. Paul, who commands that the railer, extortioner, fornicator and drunkard be put under the ban. 1 Cor. 5:11 But in our day such sinners are left in peace, especially if they are bigwigs; and to the disgrace of this noble form of authority, the ban is used only for the collection of debts of money, often so insignificant that the costs amount to more than the original debt. In order to gloss this over they have hit upon a new device, saying they put under the ban not because of debt but because of disobedience, because the summons was not respected; were it not for debt, however, they would forget the disobedience, as we see when many other sins, even their own, escape the ban. A poor man must often be disobedient if he is cited to go so many miles, lose time and money and neglect his trade. It is utter tryanny to summon a man to come such a distance across country to court.

And I commend the temporal princes[2] who will not per-

[1] See above, p. 42.

[2] In 1518 both George and Frederick of Saxony took the position that spiritual jurisdiction should be limited to spiritual matters. Gess, **Akten und Briefe zur Kirchen politik Georgs I, 44.**

mit the ban and the abuses connected with it in their lands and among their people. What are princes and counsellors for if they do not concern themselves with and judge such temporal matters as debts, each in their city and province and among their subjects? The spiritual powers should be concerned with the Word of God, with sin, and with the devil, in order to bring souls to God, and should relinquish temporal cases to the temporal judges, as Paul writes.[1] Indeed, as things are now, it is almost necessary to use the ban in order to drive the people into the Church and not out of it.

1 Cor. 6:1 ff.

21. Whether one be justly or unjustly under the ban, no one may exclude him from the Church until the Gospel has been read or the sermon preached.[2] For from the hearing of the Gospel and the sermon no one shall or can exclude or be excluded. The hearing of the Word of God should remain free to every one.[3] Nay, those who are under a just ban ought most of all to hear it, that they may perchance be moved by it to acknowledge their sin and to reform. We read that it was the ancient practice of the Church to dismiss those under the ban after the sermon, and if a whole congregation were under the ban the sermon must be allowed to proceed just as though there were no ban. In addition, even though he who is under the ban may not remain for the mass after the sermon, nor come to the sacrament,[4] nevertheless he should not neglect it, but spiritually come to the sacrament, that is, he should heartily desire it and believe that he can spiritually receive it, as was said in the treatise on the sacrament.[5]

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[1] Luther puts a peculiar construction upon this passage.

[2] The ancient service was divided into the service of the Word (missa catechumenorum) and the celebration of the sacrament (missa fidelium); before the second, those under the ban as well as the catechumens were required to withdraw.

[3] The "great ban" excluded from all services.

[4] According to Roman Catholic usage there is a distinction between hearing mass and receiving the sacrament.

[5] Compare Treatise Concerning the Blessed Sacrament, above, p. 25.

AN OPEN LETTER

TO

THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY

OF THE GERMAN NATION

CONCERNING

THE REFORM OF THE CHRISTIAN ESTATE

1520

INTRODUCTION

THE Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation is closely related to the tract on The Papacy at Rome: A Reply to the Celebrated Romanist at Leipzig.[1] In a letter to Spalatin[2] dated before June 8, 1520, Luther says: "I shall assail that ass of an Alveld in such wise as not to forget the Roman pontiff, and neither of them will be pleased." In the same letter he writes, "I am minded to issue a broadside to Charles and the nobility of Germany against the tyranny and baseness of the Roman curia." The attack upon Alveld is the tract on The Papacy at Rome; the scheda publica grew into the Open Letter. At the time when the letter to Spalatin was written, the work on The Papacy at Rome must have been already in press, for it appeared in print on the 26th of the month,[3] and the composition of the Open Letter had evidently not yet begun. On the 23d Luther sent the manuscript of the Open Letter to Amsdorf,[4] with the request that he read it and suggest changes. The two weeks immediately preceding the publication of the work On the Papacy must, therefore, have been the time when the Open Letter was composed.

In the conclusion to the earlier work Luther had said: "Moreover, I should be truly glad if kings, princes, and all the nobles would take hold, and turn the knaves from Rome out of the country, and keep the appointments to bishoprics and benefices out of their hands. How has Roman avarice come to usurp all the foundations, bishoprics and benefices of our fathers? Who has ever read or heard of such monstrous robbery? Do we not also have the people who need them, while out of our poverty we must enrich the ass-drivers and stable-boys, nay, the harlots and knaves at Rome, who look upon us as nothing else but arrant fools, and make us the objects of their vile mockery? Oh, the pity, that kings and princes have so little reverence for Christ, and His honor concerns them so little that they allow such heinous abominations to gain the upper hand, and look on, while at Rome they think of nothing but to continue in their madness and to increase the abounding misery, until no hope is left on earth except in the temporal author-

[1] In this edition, I, 337 ff.
[2] ENDERS, II, 414; SMITH, L.'s Correspondence, I, No. 266.
[3] ENDERS, II, 424.
[4] See below, p. 62.

ities. Of this I will say more anon, if this Romanist comes again; let this suffice for a beginning. May God help us at length to open our eyes. Amen."

This passage may fairly be regarded as the germ of the Open Letter. The ideas of the latter work are suggested with sufficient clearness to show that its materials are already at hand, and its plan already in the author's mind. The threat to write it is scarcely veiled. That Luther did not wait for that particular Romanist to "come again" may have been due to the intervention of another Romanist, none other than his old opponent, Sylvester Prierias. Before the 7th of June[1] Luther had received a copy of Prierias' Epitome of a Reply to Martin Luther,[2] which is the boldest and baldest possible assertion of the very theory of papal power which Luther had sought to demolish in his tract on the Papacy. In the preface to his reprint of the Epitome, Luther bids farewell to Rome: "Farewell, unhappy, hopeless, blasphemous Rome! The wrath of God hath come upon thee, as thou hast deserved! We have cared for Babylon, and she is not healed; let us, then, leave her, that she may be the habitation of dragons, spectres and witches, and true to her name of Babel, an everlasting confusion, a new pantheon of wickedness."[3]

These words were written while the Open Letter was in course of composition. The Open Letter is, therefore, Luther's first publication after the time when he recognized that the breach between him and the papal church was complete, and likely to be permanent. Meanwhile, the opposing party had come to the same conclusion. The verdict of the pope upon Luther had been long delayed, but on the 15th of June, midway between the letter to Spalatin, above mentioned, and the completion of the Open Letter, Leo X signed the bull of excommunication, though it was not published in Germany until later. Thus the Open Letter shows us the mind of Luther in the weeks when the permanent separation between him and Rome took place.

It was also the time when he had the highest hopes from the promised support of the German knights,[4] who formed the patriotic party in Germany and are included in the "nobility" to whom the Open Letter is addressed.[5]

The first edition of 4000 copies came off the press of Melchior Lotther in Wittenberg before the 18th of August.[6] It is surmised[7] that the earlier

[1] See letter of June 7th to John Hess, ENDERS, II, 411; SMITH, I, No. 265.

[2] Published at Rome 1519; printed with Luther's preface and notes, Weimar Ed., VI, 328 ff.; Erl. Ed., op. var. arg., II, 79 ff.

[3] Weimar Ed., VI, 329.

[4] See ENDERS, II, 415, 443; SMITH, Nos. 269, 279, and documents in St. Louis Ed., XV, 1630 ff.

[5] See KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, Martin Luther, I, 308 ff., and Weimar Ed., VI, 381 ff.

[6] See Luther's letters to Lang and Staupitz, who wished to have the publication withheld (ENDERS, II, 461, 463).

[7] Clemen, I, 362.

portion[1] of the work was not contained in the original manuscript, but was added while it was in the printer's hands; perhaps it was added at the suggestion of Amsdorf. Less than a week later a second edition was in course of preparation.[2] This "enlarged and revised edition"[3] contained three passages not included in the first.[4] They are indicated in the notes to the present edition.

He who would know the true Luther must read more than one of his writings; he must not by any chance omit to read the Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation. In his other works we learn to know him as the man of God, or the prophet, or the theologian; in this treatise we meet Luther the German. His heart is full of grief for the affliction of his people, and grief turns to wrath as he observes that this affliction is put upon them by the tyranny and greed of the pope and the cardinals and the "Roman vermin." The situation is desperate; appeals and protests have been all in vain; and so, as a last resort, he turns to the temporal authorities,—to Charles V, newly elected, but as yet uncrowned; to the territorial lords, great and small, who have a voice in the imperial diet and powers of jurisdiction in their own domains,—reciting the abuses of "Roman tyranny," and pleading with them to intervene in behalf of the souls that are going to destruction "through the devilish rule of Rome." It is a cry out of the heart of Germany, a nation whose bent is all religious, but which, from that very circumstance, is all the more open to the insults and wrongs and deceptions of the Roman curia.

Yet it is no formless and incoherent cry, but an orderly recital of the ills of Germany. There are times when we feel in reading it that the writer is laying violent hands on his own wrath in the effort to be calm. For all its scathing quality, it is a sane arraignment of those who "under the holy name of Christ and St. Peter" are responsible for the nation's woes, and the remedies that are proposed are, many of them, practicable as well as reasonable.

The materials of the work are drawn from many sources,—from hearsay, from personal observation, from such histories as Luther had at his command, from the proceedings of councils and of diets; there are passages which would seem to bear more than an accidental resemblance to similar passages in Hutten's Vadiscus. All was grist that came to Luther's mill. But the spirit of the work is Luther's own.

For the general historian, who is concerned more with the practical than with the theoretical or theological aspects of the Reformation, the Open Letter is undoubtedly Luther's greatest work. Its frank outspokenness about the true condition of Germany, the number and variety of the subjects

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[1] Below, pp. 65–99.
[2] See Weimar Ed., VI, 397.
[3] See title B, ibid., 398.
[4] Printed as an appendix in Clemen, I, 421–425.

that it treats, the multiplicity of the sources from which the subject-matter is drawn, and the point of view from which the whole is discussed make it a work of absorbing interest and priceless historical value. It shows, as does no other single work of the Reformation time, the things that were in men's minds and the variety of motives which led them to espouse the cause of the Protestant party. Doctrine, ethics, history, politics, economics, all have their place in the treatise. It is not only "a blast on the war-trumpet,"[1] but a connecting link between the thought of the Middle Ages and that of modern times, prophetic of the new age, but showing how closely the new is bound up with the old.

The text of the Open Letter is found in Weimar Ed., VI, 404–469; Erl. Ed., XXI, 277–360; Walch Ed., X, 296–399; St. Louis Ed., X, 266–351; Berlin Ed., I, 203–290; Clemen I, 363–425. The text of the Berlin Ed. is modernized and annotated by E. Schneider. The editions of K. Benrath (Halle, 1883) and E. Lemme (Die 3 grossen Reformationsschriften L's vom J. 1520; Gotha, 1884) contain a modernized text and extensive notes. A previous English translation in Wace and Buchheim, Luther's Primary Works (London and Philadelphia, 1896). The present translation is based on the text of Clemen.

For full discussion of the contents of the work, especially its sources, see Weimar Ed., VI, 381–391; Schäfer, Luther als Kirchenhistoriker, Gütersloh, 1897; Köhler, L's Schrift an den Adel . . . im Spiegel der Kulturgeschichte, Halle, 1895, and Luther und die Kirchengeschichte, Erlangen, 1900. Extensive comment in all the biographies, especially Köstlin-Kawerau I, 315 ff.

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[1] So it was called by Johann Lang (Enders, II, 461).

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION

CONCERNING

THE REFORM OF THE CHRISTIAN ESTATE

1520

To the

Esteemed and Reverend Master

NICHOLAS VON AMSDORF,

Licentiate of Holy Scripture and Canon at Wittenberg,
my special and kind friend;

Doctor Martin Luther.

The grace and peace of God be with thee, esteemed and reverend dear sir and friend.

The time to keep silence has passed and the time to speak is come, as saith Ecclesiastes. I have followed out our intention[1] and brought together some matters touching the reform of the Christian Estate, to be laid before the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, in the hope that God may deign to help His Church through the efforts of Eccl. 3:7

[1] Unserm furnehmen nach. See Introduction, p. 57.

the laity, since the clergy, to whom this task more properly belongs, have grown quite indifferent. I am sending the whole thing to your Reverence, that you may pass judgment on it and, if necessary, improve it.

I know full well that I shall not escape the charge of presumption in that I, a despised monk, venture to address such high and great Estates on matters of such moment, and to give advice to people of such high intelligence. I shall offer no apologies, no matter who may chide me. Perchance I owe my God and the world another piece of folly, and I have now made up my mind honestly to pay that debt, if I can do so, and for once to become court-jester; if I fail, I still have one advantage,—no one need buy me a cap or cut me my comb.[1] It is a question which one will put the bells on the other.[2] I must fulfil the proverb, "Whatever the world does, a monk must be in it, even if he has to be painted in."[3] More than once a fool has spoken wisely, and wise men often have been arrant fools, as Paul says, "If any one will be wise, let him become a fool." Moreover since I am not only a fool, but also a sworn doctor of Holy Scripture, I am glad for the chance to fulfil my doctor's oath in this fool's way.

1 Cor. 3:18

I pray you, make my excuses to the moderately intelligent, for I know not how to earn the grace and favor of the immoderately intelligent, though I have often sought to do so with great pains. Henceforth I neither desire nor regard their favor. God help us to seek not our own glory, but His alone! Amen.

Wittenberg, in the house of the Augustinians, on the Eve of St. John the Baptist (June 23d), in the year fifteen hundred and twenty.

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[1] An ironical comparison of the monks' cowl and tonsure with the headgear of the jester.

[2] i. e., Which one turns out to be the real fool.

[3] The proverb ran, Monachus semper praesens, "a monk is always there." See WANDER, Deutsches Sprichwörterlexicon, under Mönch, No. 130.

To

His Most Illustrious and Mighty Imperial Majesty,

and to

the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,

Doctor Martin Luther.

Grace and power from God, Most Illustrious Majesty, and most gracious and dear Lords.

It is not out of sheer frowardness or rashness that I, a single, poor man, have undertaken to address your worships. The distress and oppression which weigh down all the Estates of Christendom, especially of Germany, and which move not me alone, but everyone to cry out time and again, and to pray for help,[1] have forced me even now to cry aloud that God may inspire some one with His Spirit to lend this suffering nation a helping hand. Ofttimes the councils[2] have made some pretence at reformation, but their attempts have been cleverly hindered by the guile of certain men and things have gone from bad to worse. I now intend, by the help of God, to throw some light upon the wiles and wickedness of these men, to the end that when they are known, they may not henceforth be so hurtful and so great a hindrance. God has given us a noble youth to be our head and thereby has awakened great hopes of good in many hearts;[3] wherefore it is meet that we should do our part and profitably use this time of grace.

In this whole matter the first and most important thing is that we take earnest heed not to enter on it trusting in great might or in human reason, even though all power

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[1] Evidently a reference to the *Gravamina of the German Nation*; see GEBHARDT, *Die Grav. der Deutschen Nation*, Breslau, 1895.

[2] Councils of the Church, especially those of Constance (1414–18), and of Basel (1431–39).

[3] Charles V. was elected Emperor in 1519, when but twenty years of age. Hutten expresses his "hopes of good" from Charles in *Vadiscus* (BÖCKING, IV. 156).

in the world were ours; for God cannot and will not suffer a good work to be begun with trust in our own power or reason. Such works He crushes ruthlessly to earth, as it
Ps. 33:16 is written in the xxxiii. Psalm, "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength." On this account, I fear, it came to pass of old that the good Emperors Frederick I[1] and II,[2] and many other German emperors were shamefully oppressed and trodden under foot by the popes, although all the world feared them. It may be that they relied on their own might more than on God, and therefore they had to fall. In our own times, too, what was it that raised the bloodthirsty Julius II[3] to such heights? Nothing else, I fear, except that France, the Germans and Venice relied
Judges 20:21 upon themselves. The children of Benjamin slew 42,000 Israelites[4] because the latter relied on their own strength.

That it may not so fare with us and our noble young Emperor Charles, we must be sure that in this matter we are dealing not with men, but with the princes of hell, who can fill the world with war and bloodshed, but whom war and bloodshed do not overcome. We must go at this work despairing of physical force and humbly trusting God; we must seek God's help with earnest prayer, and fix our minds on nothing else than the misery and distress of suffering Christendom, without regard to the deserts of evil men. Otherwise we may start the game with great prospect of success, but when we get well into it the evil spirits will stir up such confusion that the whole world will swim in blood, and yet nothing will come of it. Let us act wisely, therefore, and in the fear of God. The more force we use, the greater our disaster if we do not act humbly and in

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[1] Frederick Barbarossa (1152–1190).

[2] Frederick II (1212–1250), grandson of Barbarossa and last of the great Hohenstaufen Emperors. He died under excommunication.

[3] Pope Julius II (1503–1513). Notorious among the popes for his unscrupulous pursuit of political power, he was continually involved in war with one and another of the European powers over the possession of territories in Italy.

[4] Luther's recollection of the figures was faulty.

God's fear. The popes and the Romans have hitherto been able, by the devil's help, to set kings at odds with one another, and they may well be able to do it again, if we proceed by our own might and cunning, without God's help.

I. THE THREE WALLS OF THE ROMANISTS

The Three Walls Described

The Romanists,[1] with great adroitness, have built three walls about them, behind which they have hitherto defended themselves in such wise that no one has been able to reform them; and this has been the cause of terrible corruption throughout all Christendom.

First, when pressed by the temporal power, they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the other hand, that the spiritual is above the temporal power. Second, when the attempt is made to reprove them out of the Scriptures, they raise the objection that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to no one except the pope. Third, if threatened with a council, they answer with the fable that no one can call a council but the pope.

In this wise they have slyly stolen from us our three rods,[2] that they may go unpunished, and have ensconced themselves within the safe stronghold of these three walls, that they may practise all the knavery and wickedness which we now see. Even when they have been compelled to hold a council they have weakened its power in advance by previously binding the princes with an oath to let them remain as they are. Moreover, they have given the pope full authority over all the decisions of the council, so that it is all one whether there are many councils or no councils,—except that they deceive us with puppet-shows and sham-battles. So terribly do they fear for their skin in a really free council! And they have intimidated kings and princes

[1] The term "Romanist" is applied by Luther to the champions of the extreme form of papal supremacy. Cf. Vol. I, p. 343 f.

[2] i. e., The three rods for the punishment of an evil pope.

by making them believe it would be an offence against God not to obey them in all these knavish, crafty deceptions.[1]

Josh. 6:20 Now God help us, and give us one of the trumpets with which the walls of Jericho were overthrown, that we may blow down these walls of straw and paper, and may set free the Christian rods for the punishment of sin, bringing to light the craft and deceit of the devil, to the end that through punishment we may reform ourselves, and once more attain God's favor.

The First Wall—the Spiritual Estate above the Temporal

Against the first wall we will direct our first attack.

It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the "spiritual estate"; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the "temporal estate." That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it; and for this reason—viz., that all Christians are truly of the "spiritual estate," and there is among them no difference at all but that of office, as Paul says in I Corinthians xii, We are all one body, yet every member has its own work, whereby it serves every other, all because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all alike Christians; for baptism, Gospel and faith alone make us "spiritual" and a Christian people.

1 Cor. 12:12 ff.

The Priesthood of Believers

But that a pope or a bishop anoints, confers tonsures, ordains, consecrates, or prescribes dress unlike that of the laity, —this may make hypocrites and graven images,[2] but it never makes a Christian or "spiritual" man. Through baptism all of us are consecrated to the priesthood, as St. Peter says in I Peter ii, "Ye are a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom," and the book of Revelation says, "Thou hast made us by Thy blood to be priests and kings." For if we had no higher consecration than pope or bishop gives, the consecration by pope or bishop would never make a priest, nor might anyone either say mass or preach

1 Pet. 2:9

Rev. 5:10

[1] Spuknisse, literally "ghosts." The gist of the sentence is, "the Romanists have frightened the world with ghost-stories."

[2] Oelgötze—"an image anointed with holy oil to make it sacred"; in modern German, "a blockhead."

a sermon or give absolution. Therefore when the bishop consecrates it is the same thing as if he, in the place and stead of the whole congregation, all of whom have like power, were to take one out of their number and charge him to use this power for the others; just as though ten brothers, all king's sons and equal heirs, were to choose one of themselves to rule the inheritance for them all,—they would all be kings and equal in power, though one of them would be charged with the duty of ruling.

To make it still clearer. If a little group of pious Christian laymen were taken captive and set down in a wilderness, and had among them no priest consecrated by a bishop, and if there in the wilderness they were to agree in choosing one of themselves, married or unmarried, and were to charge him with the office of baptising, saying mass, absolving and preaching, such a man would be as truly a priest as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him. That is why in cases of necessity any one can baptise and give absolution,[1] which would be impossible unless we were all priests. This great grace and power of baptism and of the Christian Estate they have well-nigh destroyed and caused us to forget through the canon law.[2] It was

[1] Lay-baptism in view of imminent death is a practice as old as the Christian Church. The right of the laity to administer baptism in such cases was expressly recognized by the Council of Elvira, in the year 306, and the decree of that Council became a part of the law of the Church. The right of the laity to give absolution in such cases rests on the principle that in the absence of the appointed official of the Church any Christian can do for any other Christian the things that are absolutely necessary for salvation, for "necessity knows no law." Cf. Vol. I, p. 30, note 2.

[2] The canon law, called by Luther throughout this treatise and elsewhere, the "spiritual law," is a general name for the decrees of councils ("canons" in the strict sense) and decisions of the popes ("decretals," "constitutions," etc.), promulgated by authority of the popes, and collected in the so-called Corpus juris canonici. It comprised the whole body of Church law, and embodied in legal forms the mediæval theory of papal absolutism, which accounts for the bitterness with which Luther speaks of it, especially in this treatise. The Corpus includes the following collections of canons and decretals: The Decretum of Gratian (1142), the Liber Extra (1234), the Liber Sextus (1298), the Constitutiones Clementinae (1318 or 1317), and the two books of Extravagantes,—the Extravagantes of John XXII, and the Extravagantes communes. The last pope whose decrees are included is Sixtus IV (died 1484). See Catholic Encyclop., IV, pp. 391 ff.

in the manner aforesaid that Christians in olden days chose from their number bishops and priests, who were afterwards confirmed by other bishops, without all the show which now obtains. It was thus that Sts. Augustine,[1] Ambrose[2] and Cyprian[3] became bishops.

The Temporal Rulers, Priests

Since, then, the temporal authorities are baptised with the same baptism and have the same faith and Gospel as we, we must grant that they are priests and bishops, and count their office one which has a proper and a useful place in the Christian community. For whoever comes out of the water of baptism[4] can boast that he is already consecrated priest, bishop and pope, though it is not seemly that every one should exercise the office. Nay, just because we are all in like manner priests, no one must put himself forward and undertake, without our consent and election, to do what is in the power of all of us. For what is common to all, no one dare take upon himself without the will and the command of the community; and should it happen that one chosen for such an office were deposed for malfeasance, he would then be just what he was before he held office.

The Priest an Office-holder

Therefore a priest in Christendom is nothing else than an office-holder. While he is in office, he has precedence; when deposed, he is a peasant or a townsman like the rest. Beyond all doubt, then, a priest is no longer a priest when he is deposed. But now they have invented *characteres indelebiles*,[5] and prate that a deposed

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[1] Augustine, the master-theologian of the Ancient Church, bishop of Hippo in Africa from 395–430.

[2] Ambrose, bishop of Milan from 374–397, had not yet been baptised at the time of his election to the episcopate, which was forced upon him by the unanimous voice of the people of the city.

[3] Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, 247–258, is said to have consented to accept the office only when the congregation surrounded his house and besought him to yield to their entreaties.

[4] *Was ausz der Tauff krochen ist.*

[5] The *character indelebilis*, or "indelible mark," received authoritative statement in the bull *Exultate Deo* (1439). Eugenius IV, summing up the Decrees of the Council of Florence, says: "Among these sacraments there are three—baptism, confirmation, and orders—which indelibly impress upon the soul a character, i. e., a certain spiritual mark which distinguishes them from the rest" (Mirbt, *Quellen*, 2d ed., No. 150). The Council of Trent in its XXIII.

priest is nevertheless something different from a mere layman. They even dream that a priest can never become a layman, or be anything else than a priest. All this is mere talk and man-made law.

From all this it follows that there is really no difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, "spirituals" and "temporals," as they call them, except that of office and work, but not of "estate"; for they are all of the same estate,[1]—true priests, bishops and popes,—though they are not all engaged in the same work, just as all priests and monks have not the same work. This is the teaching of St. Paul in Romans xii and I Corinthians xii, and of St. Peter in I Peter ii, as I have said above, viz., that we are all one body of Christ, the Head, all members one of another. Christ has not two different bodies, one "temporal," the other "spiritual." He is one Head, and He has one body.

Rom. 12:4 ff. I Cor. 12:12 ff. I Pet. 2:9

Therefore, just as those who are now called "spiritual" —priests, bishops or popes—are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the Word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities,—they bear sword and rod with which to punish the evil and to protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.

Rom. 13:4

Session, July 15, 1563 (Mirbt, No. 312), defined the correct Roman teaching as follows: "Since in the sacrament of orders, as in baptism and confirmation, a character is impressed which cannot be destroyed or taken away, the Holy Synod justly condemns the opinion of those who assert that the priests of the New Testament have only temporary power, and that those once rightly ordained can again be made laymen, if they do not exercise the ministry of the Word of God."

[1] i. e., They are all Christians, among whom there can be no essential difference.

See, now, how Christian is the decree which says that the temporal power is not above the "spiritual estate" and may not punish it.[1] That is as much as to say that the hand shall lend no aid when the eye is suffering. Is it not unnatural, not to say unchristian, that one member should not help another and prevent its destruction? Verily, the more honorable the member, the more should the others help. I say then, since the temporal power is
Rom. 13 ordained of God to punish evil-doers and to protect them that do well, it should therefore be left free to perform its office without hindrance through the whole body of Christendom without respect of persons, whether it affect pope, bishops, priests, monks, nuns or anybody else. For if the mere fact that the temporal power has a smaller place among the Christian offices than has the office of preachers or confessors, or of the clergy, then the tailors, cobblers, masons, carpenters, pot-boys, tapsters, farmers, and all the secular tradesmen, should also be prevented from providing pope, bishops, priests and monks with shoes, clothing, houses, meat and drink, and from paying them tribute. But if these laymen are allowed to do their work unhindered, what do the Roman scribes mean by their laws, with which they withdraw themselves from the jurisdiction of the temporal Christian power, only so that they may be free to do evil and to fulfil what St. Peter has said:
2 Pet 2:1 ff. "There shall be false teachers among you, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."

On this account the Christian temporal power should exercise its office without let or hindrance, regardless whether it be pope, bishop or priest whom it affects; who-

[1] The sharp distinction which the Roman Church drew between clergy and laity found practical application in the contention that the clergy should be exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil courts, This is the so-called privilegium fori, "benefit of clergy." It was further claimed that the government of the clergy and the administration of Church property must be entirely in the hands of the Church authorities, and that no lay rulers might either make or enforce laws which in any way affected the Church. See LEA, Studies in Church History, 169–219 and Prot. Realencyk., VI, 594.

ever is guilty, let him suffer. All that the canon law has said to the contrary is sheer invention of Roman presumption. For thus saith St. Paul to all Christians: "Let every soul (I take that to mean the pope's soul also) be subject unto the higher powers; for they bear not the sword in vain, but are the ministers of God for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." St. Peter also says: "Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, for so is the will of God." He has also prophesied that such men shall come as will despise the temporal authorities; and this has come to pass through the canon law.

Rom. 13:1, 4

1 Pet. 2:13, 15

1 Pet. 2:10

So then, I think this first paper-wall is overthrown, since the temporal power has become a member of the body of Christendom, and is of the "spiritual estate," though its work is of a temporal nature. Therefore its work should extend freely and without hindrance to all the members of the whole body; it should punish and use force whenever guilt deserves or necessity demands, without regard to pope, bishops and priests,—let them hurl threats and bans as much as they will.

This is why guilty priests, if they are surrendered to the temporal law,[1] are first deprived of their priestly dignities, which would not be right unless the temporal sword had previously had authority over them by divine right.

Again, it is intolerable that in the canon law so much importance is attached to the freedom, life and property of the clergy, as though the laity were not also as spiritual and as good Christians as they, or did not belong to the Church. Why are your life and limb, your property and honor so free, and mine not? We are all alike Christians, and have baptism, faith, Spirit and all things alike. If

[1] It was the contention of the Church authorities that priests charged with infraction of the laws of the state should first be tried in the ecclesiastical courts. If found guilty, they were degraded from the priesthood and handed over to the state authorities for punishment. Formula for degradation in the canon law, c. 2 in VI, de poen. (V, 9). See Prot. Realencyk., VI, 589.

a priest is killed, the land is laid under interdict,[1]—why not when a peasant is killed? Whence comes this great distinction between those who are equally Christians? Only from human laws and inventions!

Moreover, it can be no good spirit who has invented such exceptions and granted to sin such license and impunity. For if we are bound to strive against the works and words of the evil spirit, and to drive him out in whatever way we can, as Christ commands and His Apostles, ought we, then, to suffer it in silence when the pope or his satellites are bent on devilish words and works? Ought we for the sake of men to allow the suppression of divine commandments and truths which we have sworn in baptism to support with life and limb? Of a truth we should then have to answer for all the souls that would thereby be abandoned and led astray.

It must therefore have been the very prince of devils who said what is written in the canon law: "If the pope were so scandalously bad as to lead souls in crowds to the devil, yet he could not be deposed."[2] On this accursed and devilish foundation they build at Rome, and think that we should let all the world go to the devil, rather than resist their knavery. If the fact that one man is set over others were sufficient reason why he should escape punishment,

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[1] The interdict is the prohibition of the administration of the sacraments and of the other rites of the Church within the territory upon which the interdict is laid (Realencyk., IX, 208 f.). Its use was not uncommon in the Middle Ages, and during the time that the power of the popes was at its height it proved an effective means of bringing refractory rulers to terms. A famous instance is the interdict laid upon the Kingdom of England by Innocent III in 1208. Interdicts of more limited local extent were quite frequent. The use of the interdict as punishment for trifling infractions of church law was a subject of complaint at the diets of Worms (1521) and Nürnberg (1524). See A. Wrede, Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V., II, pp. 685 f, III, 665.

[2] The statement of which Luther here complains is found in the Decretum of Gratian, Dist. XL, c. 6, Si papa. In his Epitome (see Introduction, p. 58), Prierias had quoted this canon against Luther, as follows: "A Pontifex indubitatus (i. e., a pope who is not accused of heresy or schism) cannot lawfully be deposed or judged either by a council or by the whole world, even if he is so scandalous as to lead people with him by crowds into the possession of hell." Luther's comment is: "Be astonished, O heaven; shudder, O earth! Behold, O Christians, what Rome is!" (Weimar Ed., VI, 336).

then no Christian could punish another, since Christ commands that every man shall esteem himself the lowliest and the least.

Matt. 18:4 Luke 9:48

Where sin is, there is no escape from punishment; as St. Gregory[1] also writes that we are indeed all equal, but guilt puts us in subjection one to another. Now we see how they whom God and the Apostles have made subject to the temporal sword deal with Christendom, depriving it of its liberty by their own wickedness, without warrant of Scripture. It is to be feared that this is a game of Antichrist[2] or a sign that he is close at hand.

The Second Wall—The Pope the Interpreter of Scripture; Papal Infallibility

The second wall[3] is still more flimsy and worthless. They wish to be the only Masters of the Holy Scriptures,[4] even though in all their lives they learn nothing from them. They assume for themselves sole authority, and with insolent juggling of words they would persuade us that the pope, whether he be a bad man or a good man, cannot err in matters of faith;[5] and yet they cannot prove

[1] Gregory the Great, pope 590–604. The passage is found in MIGNE, LXXVI, 203; LXXVII, 34.

[2] Antichrist, the incarnation of all that is hostile to Christ and His Kingdom. His appearance is prophesied in 2 Thess. 2:3–10 (the "man of sin, sitting in the temple of God"); 1 John 2 : 18, 22; 4 : 3, and Rev. 13. In the early Church the Fathers sometimes thought the prophecies fulfilled in the person of some especially pestilent heretic. Wyclif applied the term to the pope,—"the pope would seem to be not the vicar of Christ, but the vicar of Antichrist" (see LOOFS, Dogmengeschichte, 4th ed., p. 649). On Dec. 11, 1518, Luther wrote to Link: "You can see whether my suspicion is correct that at the Roman court the true Antichrist rules of whom St. Paul speaks"; and March 13, 1519, he wrote to Spalatin: "I am not sure but that the pope is Antichrist or his apostle." It was the worldly pretensions of the papacy which suggested the idea both to Wyclif and to Luther. By the year 1520 Luther had come to the definite conclusion that the pope was the "man of sin, sitting in the temple of God," and this opinion he never surrendered.

[3] See above, p. 65.

[4] According to academic usage, the holder of a Master's degree was authorised to expound the subject named in the degree.

[5] The doctrine of papal infallibility was never officially sanctioned in the Middle Ages, but the claim of infallibility was repeatedly made by the champions of the more extreme view of papal power, e. g., Augustinus Triumphus (died 1328) in his Summa de potestate Papae. In his attack upon the XCV Theses (Dialogus de potestate Papae, Dec., 1517) Prierias had asserted, "The supreme pontiff (i. e., the pope) cannot err when giving a decision as pontiff, i. e., speaking officially (ex officio), and doing what in him lies to learn the truth"; and again, "Whoever does not rest upon the teaching of the Roman Church

a single letter of it. Hence it comes that so many heretical and unchristian, nay, even unnatural ordinances have a place in the canon law, of which, however, there is no present need to speak. For since they think that the Holy Spirit never leaves them, be they never so unlearned and wicked, they make bold to decree whatever they will. And if it were true, where would be the need or use of the Holy Scriptures? Let us burn them, and be satisfied with the unlearned lords at Rome, who are possessed of the Holy Spirit,—although He can possess only pious hearts! Unless I had read it myself,[1] I could not have believed that the devil would make such clumsy pretensions at Rome, and find a following.

But not to fight them with mere words, we will quote
1 Cor. 14:30 the Scriptures. St. Paul says in I Corinthians xiv: "If to anyone something better is revealed, though he be sitting and listening to another in God's Word, then the first, who is speaking, shall hold his peace and give place." What would be the use of this commandment, if we were only to believe him who does the talking or who has the
John 6:45 highest seat? Christ also says in John vi, that all Christians shall be taught of God. Thus it may well happen that the pope and his followers are wicked men, and no true Christians, not taught of God, not having true understanding. On the other hand, an ordinary man may have true understanding; why then should we not follow him? Has not the pope erred many times? Who would help Christendom when the pope errs, if we were not to believe another, who had the Scriptures on his side, more than the pope?

Therefore it is a wickedly invented fable, and they cannot produce a letter in defence of it, that the inter-

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and the supreme pontiff as an infallible rule of faith, from which even Holy Scripture draws its vigor and authority, is a heretic" (Erl. Ed., op. var. arg., I, 348). In the Epitome he had said: "Even though the pope as an individual (singularis persona) can do wrong and hold a wrong faith, nevertheless as pope he cannot give a wrong decision" (Weimar Ed., VI, 337).

[1] Most recently in Prierias's Epitome. See preceding note.

pretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the pope alone. They have themselves usurped this power; and although they allege that this power was given to Peter when the keys were given to him, it is plain enough that the keys were not given to Peter alone, but to the whole community.[1] Moreover, the keys were not ordained for doctrine or government, but only for the binding and loosing of sin, and whatever further power of the keys they arrogate to themselves is mere invention. But Christ's word to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," cannot be applied to the pope, since the majority of the popes have been without faith, as they must themselves confess. Besides, it is not only for Peter that Christ prayed, but also for all Apostles and Christians, as he says in John xvii: "Father, I pray for those whom Thou hast given Me, and not for these only, but for all who believe on Me through their word." Is not this clear enough?

John 20:22 ff.

Luke 22:32

John 17:9, 20

Only think of it yourself! They must confess that there are pious Christians among us, who have the true faith, Spirit, understanding, word and mind of Christ. Why, then, should we reject their word and understanding and follow the pope, who has neither faith nor Spirit? That would be to deny the whole faith and the Christian Church. Moreover, it is not the pope alone who is always in the right, if the article of the Creed is correct: "I believe one holy Christian Church"; otherwise the prayer must run: "I believe in the pope at Rome," and so reduce the Christian Church to one man,—which would be nothing else than a devilish and hellish error.

Besides, if we are all priests, as was said above,[2] and all have one faith, one Gospel, one sacrament, why should we not also have the power to test and judge what is correct

[1] Luther had discussed the whole subject of the power of the keys in a Latin treatise, Resolutio super propositione xiii. de potestate papae, of 1519 (Weimar Ed., II, pp. 185 ff., and in the German treatise The Papacy at Rome (Vol. I, pp. 337–394).

[2] Pp. 66 ff.

or incorrect in matters of faith? What becomes of the
1 Cor. 2:15 words of Paul in I Corinthians ii: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man,"
2 Cor. 4:13 and II Corinthians iv: "We have all the same Spirit of faith"? Why, then, should not we perceive what squares with faith and what does not, as well as does an unbelieving pope?

All these and many other texts should make us bold and
2 Cor. 3:17 free, and we should not allow the Spirit of liberty, as Paul calls Him, to be frightened off by the fabrications of the popes, but we ought to go boldly forward to test all that they do or leave undone, according to our interpretation of the Scriptures, which rests on faith, and compel them to follow not their own interpretation, but the one that is
Gen. 21:12 better. In the olden days Abraham had to listen to his Sarah, although she was in more complete subjection to
Num. 22:28 him than we are to anyone on earth. Balaam's ass, also, was wiser than the prophet himself. If God then spoke by an ass against a prophet, why should He not be able even now to speak by a righteous man against the pope? In
Gal. 2:11 ff. like manner St. Paul rebukes St. Peter as a man in error. Therefore it behooves every Christian to espouse the cause of the faith, to understand and defend it, and to rebuke all errors.

The Third Wall—Pope and Council

The third wall falls of itself when the first two are down. For when the pope acts contrary to the Scriptures, it is our duty to stand by the Scriptures, to reprove him, and to constrain him, according to the word
Matt. 18:15 of Christ in Matthew xviii: "If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell it him between thee and him alone; if he hear thee not, then take with thee one or two more; if he hear them not, tell it to the Church; if he hear not the Church, consider him a heathen." Here every member is commanded to care for every other. How much rather should we do this when the member that does evil is a ruling member, and by his evil-doing is the cause of much harm and

offence to the rest! But if I am to accuse him before the Church, I must bring the Church together.

They have no basis in Scripture for their contention that it belongs to the pope alone to call a council or confirm its actions;[1] for this is based merely upon their own laws, which are valid only in so far as they are not injurious to Christendom or contrary to the laws of God. When the pope deserves punishment, such laws go out of force, since it is injurious to Christendom not to punish him by means of a council.

Thus we read in Acts xv. that it was not St. Peter who called the Apostolic Council, but the Apostles and elders. If, then, that right had belonged to St. Peter alone, the council would not have been a Christian council, but an heretical conciliabulum.[2] Even the Council of Nicæa—the most famous of all—was neither called nor confirmed by the Bishop of Rome, but by the Emperor Constantine,[3] and many other emperors after him did the like, yet these councils were the most Christian of all.[4] But if the pope alone had the right to call councils, then all these councils must have been heretical. Moreover, if I consider the councils which the pope has created, I find that they have done nothing of special importance. Acts 15:6

Therefore, when necessity demands, and the pope is an offence to Christendom, the first man who is able should, as a faithful member of the whole body, do what he can

[1] Another contention of Prierias. In 1518 (Nov. 28th) Luther had appealed his cause from the decision of the pope, which he foresaw would be adverse, to the decision of a council to be held at some future time. In the Epitome Prierias discusses this appeal, asserting, among other things, that "when there is one undisputed pontiff, it belongs to him alone to call a council," and that "the decrees of councils neither bind nor hold (nullum ligant vel astringunt) unless they are confirmed by authority of the Roman pontiff" (Weimar Ed., VI, 335).

[2] i. e., A mere gathering of people.

[3] The Council of Nicæa, the first of the great councils of the Church, assembled in 325 for the settlement of the Arian controversy. Luther's statement that it was called by the Emperor Constantine, and that its decisions did not derive their validity from any papal confirmation, is historically correct. On Luther's statements about this council, see Schäfer, Luther als Kirchenhistoriker, pp. 291 ff.; Köhler, Luther und die Kg., pp. 148 ff.

[4] Luther is here referring to the earlier so-called "ecumenical" councils.

to bring about a truly free council.[1] No one can do this so well as the temporal authorities, especially since now they also are fellow-Christians, fellow-priests, "fellow-spirituals,"[2] fellow-lords over all things, and whenever it is needful or profitable, they should give free course to the office and work in which God has put them above every man. Would it not be an unnatural thing, if a fire broke out in a city, and everybody were to stand by and let it burn on and on and consume everything that could burn, for the sole reason that nobody had the authority of the burgomaster, or because, perhaps, the fire broke out in the burgomaster's house? In such case is it not the duty of every citizen to arouse and call the rest? How much more should this be done in the spiritual city of Christ, if a fire of offence breaks out, whether in the papal government, or anywhere else? In the same way, if the enemy attacks a city, he who first rouses the others deserves honor and thanks; why then should he not deserve honor who makes known the presence of the enemy from hell, and awakens the Christians, and calls them together?

But all their boasts of an authority which dare not be opposed amount to nothing after all. No one in Christendom has authority to do injury, or to forbid the resisting of injury. There is no authority in the Church save for edification. Therefore, if the pope were to use his authority to prevent the calling of a free council, and thus became a hindrance to the edification of the Church, we should have regard neither for him nor for his authority; and if he were to hurl his bans and thunderbolts, we should despise his conduct as that of a madman, and relying on God, hurl back the ban on him, and coerce him as best we could. For this presumptuous authority of his is nothing; he has no such authority, and he is quickly overthrown by a text of Scripture; for Paul says to the Corinthians, "God has given us authority not for the destruction, but for the edi-

2 Cor. 10:8

[1] i. e., A council which will not be subject to the pope. Cf. Erl. Ed., xxvi, 112.
[2] i. e., They belong to the "spiritual estate"; see above, p. 69.

fication of Christendom." Who is ready to overleap this text? It is only the power of the devil and of Antichrist which resists the things that serve for the edification of Christendom; it is, therefore, in no wise to be obeyed, but is to be opposed with life and goods and all our strength.

Even though a miracle were to be done in the pope's behalf against the temporal powers, or though someone were to be stricken with a plague—which they boast has sometimes happened—it should be considered only the work of the devil, because of the weakness of our faith in God. Christ Himself prophesied in Matthew xxiv: "There shall come in My Name false Christs and false prophets, and do signs and wonders, so as to deceive even the elect," and Paul says in II Thessalonians ii, that Antichrist shall, through the power of Satan, be mighty in lying wonders. Matt. 24:24 2 Thess. 2:9

Let us, therefore, hold fast to this: No Christian authority can do anything against Christ; as St. Paul says, "We can do nothing against Christ, but for Christ." Whatever does aught against Christ is the power of Antichrist and of the devil, even though it were to rain and hail wonders and plagues. Wonders and plagues prove nothing, especially in these last evil times, for which all the Scriptures prophesy false wonders. Therefore we must cling with firm faith to the words of God, and then the devil will cease from wonders. 2 Cor. 13:8 2 Thess. 2:9 f.

Thus I hope that the false, lying terror with which the Romans have this long time made our conscience timid and stupid, has been allayed. They, like all of us, are subject to the temporal sword; they have no power to interpret the Scriptures by mere authority, without learning; they have no authority to prevent a council or, in sheer wantonness, to pledge it, bind it, or take away its liberty; but if they do this, they are in truth the communion of Antichrist and of the devil, and have nothing at all of Christ except the name.

II. ABUSES TO BE DISCUSSED IN COUNCILS

We shall now look at the matters which should be discussed in the councils, and with which popes, cardinals, bishops and all the scholars ought properly to be occupied day and night if they loved Christ and His Church. But if they neglect this duty, then let the laity[1] and the temporal authorities see to it, regardless of bans and thunders; for an unjust ban is better than ten just releases, and an unjust release worse than ten just bans. Let us, therefore,
Acts 5:29 awake, dear Germans, and fear God rather than men, that we may not share the fate of all the poor souls who are so lamentably lost through the shameful and devilish rule of the Romans, in which the devil daily takes a larger and larger place,—if, indeed, it were possible that such a hellish rule could grow worse, a thing I can neither conceive nor believe.

Worldliness of the pope

1. It is a horrible and frightful thing that the ruler of Christendom, who boasts himself vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter, lives in such worldly splendor that in this regard no king nor emperor can equal or approach him, and that he who claims the title of "most holy" and "most spiritual" is more worldly than the world itself. He wears a triple crown, when the greatest kings wear but a single crown;[2] if that is like the poverty of Christ and of St. Peter, then it is a new kind of likeness. When a word is said against it, they cry out "Heresy!" but that is because they do not wish to hear how unchristian and ungodly such a practice is. I think, however, that if the pope were with tears to pray to God, he would have to lay aside these crowns, for our God can suffer no pride; and his office is nothing else than this,—daily to weep and pray for Christendom, and to set an example of all humility.

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[1] Der Haufe, i. e. Christians considered en masse, without regard to official position in the Church.

[2] The papal crown dates from the XI Century; the triple crown, or tiara, from the beginning of the XIV. It was intended to signify that very superiority of the pope to the rulers of this world, of which Luther here complains. See Realencyk., X, 532, and literature there cited.

However that may be, this splendor of his is an offence, and the pope is bound on his soul's salvation to lay it aside, because St. Paul says, "Abstain from all outward shows, which give offence," and in Rom. xii, "We should provide good, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men." An ordinary bishop's crown would be enough for the pope; he should be greater than others in wisdom and holiness, and leave the crown of pride to Antichrist, as did his predecessors several centuries ago. They say he is a lord of the world; that is a lie; for Christ, Whose vicar and officer he boasts himself to be, said before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world," and no vicar's rule can go beyond his lord's. Moreover he is not the vicar of the glorified, but of the crucified Christ, as Paul says, "I was willing to know nothing among you save Christ, and Him only as the Crucified"; and in Philippians ii, "So think of yourselves as ye see in Christ, Who emptied Himself and took upon Him the appearance of a servant"; and again in I Corinthians i, "We preach Christ, the Crucified." Now they make the pope a vicar of the glorified Christ in heaven, and some of them have allowed the devil to rule them so completely that they have maintained that the pope is above the angels in heaven and has authority over them.[1] These are indeed the very works of the very Antichrist.

1 Thess. 5:21

Rom. 12:17

John 17:36

1 Cor. 2:2

Phil. 2:5

1 Cor. 1:23

2. What is the use in Christendom of those people who are called the cardinals? I shall tell you. Italy and Germany have many rich monasteries, foundations, benefices, and livings. No better way has been discovered to bring all these to Rome than by creating cardinals and giving them the bishoprics, monasteries and prelacies, and so overthrowing the worship of God. For this reason we now see Italy a very wilderness—monasteries in ruins, bishoprics devoured, the prelacies and the revenues of all the churches drawn to Rome, cities decayed,

The Cardinals

[1] A statement made by Augustinus Triumphus. See above, p. 73, note 5; and below, p. 246.

land and people laid waste, because there is no more worship or preaching. Why? The cardinals must have the income.[1] No Turk could have so devastated Italy and suppressed the worship of God.

Now that Italy is sucked dry, they come into Germany,[2] and begin oh, so gently. But let us beware, or Germany will soon become like Italy. Already we have some cardinals; what the Romans seek by that the "drunken Germans" are not to understand until we have not a bishopric, a monastery, a living, a benefice, a heller or a pfennig left. Antichrist must take the treasures of the earth, as it was prophesied. So it goes on. They skim the cream off the bishoprics, monasteries and benefices, and because they do not yet venture to turn them all to shameful use, as they have done in Italy, they only practise for the present the sacred trickery of coupling together ten or twenty prelacies and taking a yearly portion from each of them, so as to make a tidy sum after all. The priory of Würzburg yields a thousand gulden; that of Bamberg, something; Mainz, Trier and the others, something more; and so from one to ten thousand gulden might be got together, in order that a cardinal might live at Rome like a rich king.

Dan. 11:39, 43

"After they are used to this, we will create thirty or forty cardinals in a day,[3] and give to one Mount St. Michael at Bamberg[4] and the bishopric of Würzburg to boot, hang

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[1] The Cardinal della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II, held at one time the archbishopric of Avignon, the bishoprics of Bologna, Lausanne, Coutances, Viviers, Mende, Ostia and Velletri, and the abbacies of Nonantola and Grottaferrata. This is but one illustration of the scandalous pluralism practised by the cardinals. Cf. Lea, in Cambridge Mod. Hist., I, pp. 659 f.

[2] The complaint that the cardinals were provided with incomes by appointment to German benefices goes back to the Council of Constance (1415). Cf. Benrath, p. 87, note 17.

[3] The creation of new cardinals was a lucrative proceeding for the popes. On July 31, 1517, Leo X created thirty-one cardinals, and is said to have received from the new appointees about 300,000 ducats. Needless to say, the cardinals expected to make up the fees out of the income of their livings. See Weimar Ed., VI, 417, note 1, and Pastor, Gesch. der Päpste IV, 1, 137. Cf. Hutten's Vadiscus (Böcking IV, 188).

[4] The famous Benedictine monastery just outside the city of Bamberg.

on to these a few rich livings, until churches and cities are waste, and after that we will say, 'We are Christ's vicars and shepherds of Christ's sheep; the mad, drunken Germans must put up with it.' "

I advise, however, that the number of the cardinals be reduced, or that the pope be made to keep them at his own expense. Twelve of them would be more than enough, and each of them might have an income of a thousand gulden a year.[1] How comes it that we Germans must put up with such robbery and such extortion of our property, at the hands of the pope? If the Kingdom of France has prevented it,[2] why do we Germans let them make such fools and apes of us? It would all be more bearable if in this way they only stole our property; but they lay waste the churches and rob Christ's sheep of their pious shepherds, and destroy the worship and the Word of God. Even if there were not a single cardinal, the Church would not go under. As it is they do nothing for the good of Christendom; they only wrangle about the incomes of bishoprics and prelacies, and that any robber could do.

The Curia

3. If ninety-nine parts of the papal court[3] were done away and only the hundredth part allowed to remain, it would still be large enough to give decisions in matters of faith. Now, however, there is such a swarm of vermin yonder in Rome, all boasting that they are "papal," that there was nothing like it in Babylon. There are more than three

[1] The proposal made at Constance (see above, p. 82, note 2) was more generous. It suggested a salary of three to four thousand gulden.

[2] As early as the XIV Century both England and France had enacted laws prohibiting the very practices of which Luther here complains. It should be noted, however, that these laws were enforced only occasionally, and never very strictly.

[3] The papal court or curia consisted of all the officials of various sorts who were employed in the transaction of papal business, including those who were in immediate attendance upon the person of the pope, the so-called "papal family." On the number of such officials in the XVI Century, see BENRATH, p. 88, note 18, where reference is made to 949 offices, exclusive of those which had to do with the administration of the city of Rome and of the States of the Church, and not including the members of the pope's "family." The Gravamina of 1521 complain that the increase of these offices in recent years has added greatly to the financial burdens of the German Church (WREDE, Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V, II, 675).

thousand papal secretaries alone; who will count the other offices, when they are so many that they scarcely can be counted? And they all lie in wait for the prebends and benefices of Germany as wolves lie in wait for the sheep. I believe that Germany now gives much more to the pope at Rome than it gave in former times to the emperors. Indeed, some estimate that every year more than three hundred thousand gulden find their way from Germany to Rome, quite uselessly and fruitlessly; we get nothing for it but scorn and contempt. And yet we wonder that princes, nobles, cities, endowments, land and people are impoverished! We should rather wonder that we still have anything to eat!

Since we here come to the heart of the matter, we will pause a little, and let it be seen that the Germans are not quite such gross fools as not to note or understand the sharp practices of the Romans. I do not now complain that at Rome God's command and Christian law are despised; for such is the state of Christendom, and particularly of Rome, that we may not now complain of such high matters. Nor do I complain that natural or temporal law and reason count for nothing. The case is worse even than that. I complain that they do not keep their own self-devised canon law, though it is, to be sure, mere tyranny, avarice and temporal splendor, rather than law. Let us see!

The Annates

In former times German emperors and princes permitted the pope to receive the annates from all the benefices of the German nation, i. e., the half of the first year's revenues from each benefice.[1] This permission was given, how-

[1] On the annates, see Vol. I, p. 383, note 1. Early in their history, which dates from the beginning of the XIV. Century, the annates (fructus medii temporis) had become a fixed tax on all Church offices which fell vacant, and the complaint of extortion in their appraisement and collection was frequently raised. The Council of Constance restricted the obligation to bishoprics and abbacies, and such other benefices as had a yearly income of more than 24 gulden. The Council of Basel (1439) resolved to abolish them entirely, but the resolution of the Council was inoperative, and in the Concordat of Vienna (1448) the German nation agreed to abide by the decision of Constance. On the use of the term "annates" to include

ever, in order that by means of these large sums of money, the pope might accumulate a treasure for fighting against the Turks and infidels in defence of Christendom, so that the burden of the war might not rest too heavily upon the nobility, but that the clergy also should contribute something toward it. This single-hearted devotion of the German nation the popes have so used, that they have received this money for more than a hundred years, have now made of it a binding tax and tribute, and have not only accumulated no treasure, but have used the money to endow many orders and offices at Rome, and to provide these offices with salaries, as though the annates were a fixed rent.

Saracen-tax

When they pretend that they are about to fight against the Turks, they send out emissaries to gather money. Oftimes they issue an indulgence on this same pretext of fighting the Turks,[1] for they think the mad Germans are forever to remain utter and arrant fools, give them money without end, and satisfy their unspeakable greed; though we clearly see that not a heller of the annates or of the indulgence-money or of all the rest, is used against the Turks, but all of it goes into the bottomless bag. They lie and deceive, make laws and make agreements with us, and they do not intend to keep any of them. All this must be counted the work of Christ and St. Peter!

Now, in this matter the German nation, bishops and princes, should consider that they too are Christians, and should protect the people, whom they are set to rule and

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other payments to the curia, especially the servitia, see Catholic Encyclopedia, I, pp. 537 f.

Luther here alleges that the annates are not applied to their ostensible purpose, viz., the Crusade. This charge is repeated in the Gravamina of the German Nation presented to the Diet of Worms (1521), with the additional allegation that the amount demanded in the way of annates has materially increased (A. Wrede, Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V., II, pp. 675 f.). Similar complaints had been made at the Diet of Augsburg (1518), and were repeated at the Diet of Nürnberg (Wrede, op. cit., III, 660). Hutten calls the annates "a good fat robbery" (Ed. Böcking, IV, 207). In England the annates were abolished by Act of Parliament (April 10, 1532)

[1] On the crusading-indulgences, see Vol. I, p. 18.

guard in things temporal and spiritual, against these ravening wolves who, in sheep's clothing, pretend to be shepherds and rulers; and, since the annates are so shamefully abused and the stipulated conditions are not fulfilled, they should not permit their land and people to be so sadly robbed and ruined, against all justice; but by a law of the emperor or of the whole nation, they should either keep the annates at home or else abolish them again.[1] For since the Romans do not keep the terms of the agreement, they have no right to the annates. Therefore the bishops and princes are bound to punish or prevent such thievery and robbery, as the law requires.

In this they should aid the pope and support him, for he is perchance too weak to prevent such an abuse all by himself; or if he were to undertake to defend and maintain this practice, they ought resist him and fight against him as against a wolf and a tyrant, for he has no authority to do or to defend evil. Moreover, if it were ever desired to accumulate such a treasure against the Turks, we ought in the future to have sense enough to see that the German nation would be a better custodian for it than the pope; for the German nation has people enough for the fighting, if only the money is forthcoming. It is with the annates as it has been with many another Roman pretence.

Papal Months

Again, the year has been so divided between the pope and the ruling bishops and canons,[2] that the pope has six months in the year—every other month—in which to bestow the benefices which fall vacant in his months.[3] In this way

[1] i. e., As was done by the Council of Basel. See above, p. 84, note 1.

[2] The canons are the clergy attached to a cathedral church who constituted the "chapter" of that cathedral, and to whom the right to elect the bishop normally belonged.

[3] This whole section deals with the abuse of the "right of reservation," i. e., the alleged right of the pope to appoint directly to vacant church positions. According to papal theory the right of appointment belonged absolutely to the pope, who graciously yielded the right to others under certain circumstances, reserving it to himself in other cases. The practice of reserving the appointments seems to date from the XII Century, and was originally an arbitrary exercise of papal authority. The rules which came to govern the reservation of appointments were regarded as limitations upon the authority of the pope, The rule of the "papal months," as it

almost all the benefices are absorbed by Rome, especially the very best livings and dignities,[1] and when once they fall into the hands of Rome, they never come out of them again, though a vacancy may never again occur in the pope's month. Thus the canons are cheated. This is a genuine robbery, which intends to let nothing escape. Therefore it is high time that the "papal months" be altogether abolished, and that everything which they have brought to Rome be taken back again. For the princes and nobles should take measures that the stolen goods be returned, the thieves punished, and those who have abused privilege be deprived of privilege. If it is binding and valid when the pope on the day after his election makes, in his chancery, rules and laws whereby our foundations and livings are robbed,—a thing which he has no right to do; then it should be still more valid if the Emperor Charles on the day after his coronation[2] were to make rules and laws that not another benefice or living in all Germany shall be allowed to come into the hands of Rome by means of the "papal months," and that the livings which have already fallen into its hands shall be released, and redeemed from the Roman robbers; for he has this right by virtue of his office and his sword.

But now the Roman See of Avarice and Robbery has not been able to await the time when all the benefices, one after another, would, by the "papal months," come into its power, but hastens, with insatiable appetite, to get possession of them all as speedily as possible; and so besides the

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obtained in Germany in Luther's time, is found in the Concordat of Vienna of 1448 (Mirbt, Quellen, 2d ed., No. 261, pp. 167 f.). It provides that livings, with the exception of the higher dignities in the cathedrals and the chief posts in the monasteries, which fall vacant in the months of February, April, June, August, October and December, shall be filled by the ordinary methods—election, presentation, appointment by the bishop, etc.—but that vacancies occurring in the other months shall be filled by appointment of the pope.

[1] i. e., Church offices which carried with them certain rights of jurisdiction and gave their possessors a certain honorary precedence over other officials of the Church. See Meyer in Realencyk., IV, 658.

[2] Charles V, though elected emperor, was not crowned until October 22d.

annates and the "months" it has hit upon a device by which benefices and livings fall to Rome in three ways:

First, If any one who holds a free[1] living dies at Rome or on the way to Rome, his living must forever belong to the Roman—I should rather say the robbing—See;[2] and yet they will not be called robbers, though they are guilty of such robbery as no one has ever heard or read about.

Second, In case any one who belongs to the household of the pope or of the cardinals[3] holds or takes over a benefice, or in case one who already holds a benefice afterwards enters the "household" of the pope or of a cardinal. But who can count the "household" of the pope and of the cardinals, when the pope, if he only goes on a pleasure-ride, takes with him three or four thousand mule-riders, eclipsing all emperors and kings? Christ and St. Peter went on foot in order that their vicars might have the more pomp and splendor. Now avarice has cleverly thought out another scheme, and brings it to pass that even here many have the name of "papal servant," just as though they were in Rome; all in order that in every place the mere rascally little word "papal servant" may bring all benefices to Rome and tie them fast there forever. Are not these vexatious and devilish inventions? Let us beware! Soon Mainz, Madgeburg and Halberstadt will gently pass into the hands of Rome, and the cardinalate will be paid for dearly enough.[4] "Afterwards we will make all the German bishops cardinals so that there will be nothing left outside."

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[1] i. e., A living which has not hitherto been filled by papal appointment.

[2] This rule, like that of the "papal months," is found in the Concordat of Vienna. Luther's complaint is reiterated in the Gravamina of 1521. (WREDE, Deutsche Reichstagsakten, etc., II, 673.)

[3] Des Papstes und der Cardinäle Gesinde, i. e., all those who were counted members of the "family" or "household" (called Dienstverwandte in the Gravamina of 1521) of the pope or of any of the cardinals. The term included those who were in immediate attendance upon the pope or the cardinals, and all those to whom, by virtue of any special connection with the curia, the name "papal servant" could be made to apply. These are the "courtesans" to whom Luther afterwards refers.

[4] In 1513 Albrecht of Brandenburg was made Archbishop of Magdeburg and later in the same year Administrator of Halberstadt; in 1514 he became Archbishop of Mainz as well. In 1518 he was made cardinal.

Third, When a contest has started at Rome over a benefice.[1] This I hold to be almost the commonest and widest road for bringing livings to Rome. For when there is no contest at home, unnumbered knaves will be found at Rome to dig up contests out of the earth and assail livings at their will. Thus many a good priest has to lose his living, or settle the contest for a time by the payment of a sum of money.[2] Such a living rightly or wrongly contested must also belong forever to the Roman See. It would be no wonder if God were to rain from heaven fire and brimstone and to sink Rome in the abyss, as He did Sodom and Gomorrah of old. Why should there be a pope in Christendom, if his power is used for nothing else than such archknavery, and if he protects and practices it? O noble princes and lords, how long will ye leave your lands and people naked to these ravening wolves! Gen. 19:24

Since even these practices were not enough, and Avarice grew impatient at the long time it took to get hold of all the bishoprics, therefore my Lord Avarice devised the fiction that the bishoprics should be nominally abroad, but that their land and soil should be at Rome, and no bishop can be confirmed unless with a great sum of money he buy the pallium,[3] and bind himself with terrible oaths **The Pallium**

[1] This rule, like the others mentioned above, is contained in the Concordat of Vienna.

[2] Cf. The Gravamina of 1521, No. 20, Von anfechtung der cordissanen (see above, p. 88, note 3), where the name cordissei is applied to the practice of attacking titles to benefices. (WREDE, op. cit., II, pp. 677 f.)

[3] The pallium is a woolen shoulder-cape which is the emblem of the archbishop's office, and which must be secured from Rome. The bestowal of the pallium by the pope is a very ancient custom. Gregory I (590–604) mentions it as prisca consuetudo (Dist., C. c. 3). The canon law prescribes (Dist. C. c. 1) that the archbishop-elect must secure the pallium from Rome within three months of his election; otherwise he is forbidden to discharge any of the duties of his office. It is regarded as the necessary complement of his election and consecration, conferring the "plenitude of the pontifical office," and the name of archbishop. Luther's charge that it had to be purchased "with a great sum of money" is substantiated by similar complaints from the XII Century on, though the language of the canon law makes it evident that Luther's other contention is also correct, viz., that the pallium was originally bestowed gratis. The sum required from the different archbishops varied with the wealth of their sees, and was a fixed sum in each case. The Gravamina of 1521 complain that the price

to be the pope's servant.[1] This is the reason that no bishop ventures to act against the pope. That, too, is what the Romans were seeking when they imposed the oath, and thus the very richest bishoprics have fallen into debt and ruin. Mainz pays, as I hear, 20,000 gulden. These be your Romans! To be sure they decreed of old in the canon law that the pallium should be bestowed gratis, the number of papal servants diminished, the contests lessened, the chapters[2] and bishops allowed their liberty. But this did not bring in money, and so they turned over a new leaf, and all authority was taken from the bishops and chapters; they are made ciphers, and have no office nor authority nor work, but everything is ruled by the archknaves at Rome; soon they will have in hand even the office of sexton and bell-ringer in all the churches. All contests are brought to Rome, and by authority of the pope everyone does as he likes.

What happened this very year? The Bishop of Strassburg[3] wished to govern his chapter properly and to institute reforms in worship, and with this end in view made certain godly and Christian regulations. But my dear Lord Pope and the Holy Roman See, at the instigation of the priests, overthrew and altogether condemned this holy and spiritual ordinance. This is called "feeding the sheep of Christ!" Thus priests are to be encouraged against their own bishop, and their disobedience to divine law is to be protected! Antichrist himself, I hope, will not dare to put God to such open shame! There you have your pope after your own heart! Why did he do this? Ah! if one church were reformed, it would be a dangerous departure; Rome's turn

John 20:15–17

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has been raised: "Although according to ancient ordinance the bishoprics of Mainz, Cologne, Salzburg, etc., were bound to pay for the pallium about 10,000 gulden and no more, they can now scarcely get a pallium from Rome for 20 or 24 thousand gulden." (Wrede, op. cit., II, 675.)

[1] The oath of allegiance to the pope was required before the pallium could be bestowed (Dist. C, c. 1). The canon law describes this oath as one "of allegiance, obedience and unity" (X, I, 6, c. 4).

[2] See above, p. 86, note 2.

[3] cf. Luther to Spalatin, June 25, 1520 (Enders, II, 424; Smith, No. 271).

too might come! Therefore it were better that no priest should be left at peace with another, that kings and princes should be set at odds, as has been the custom heretofore, and the world filled with the blood of Christians, only so the concord of Christians should not trouble the Holy Roman See with a reformation.

So far we have been getting an idea of how they deal with livings which become vacant. But for tender-hearted Avarice the vacancies are too few, and so he brings his foresight to bear upon the benefices which are still occupied by their incumbents, so that they must be unfilled, even though they are not unfilled.[1] And this he does in many ways, as follows:

Coadjutorships

First, He lies in wait for fat prebends or bishoprics which are held by an old or a sick man, or by one with an alleged disability. To such an incumbent, without his desire or consent, the Holy See gives a coadjutor, i. e., an "assistant," for the coadjutor's benefit, because he is a "papal servant," or has paid for the position, or has earned it by some other ignoble service to Rome. In this case the rights of the chapter or the rights of him who has the bestowal of the living[2] must be surrendered, and the whole thing fall into the hands of Rome.

Commendations

Second, There is a little word commend,[3] by which the pope entrusts the keeping of a rich, fat

[1] i. e., The benefices are treated as though they were vacant.

[2] In the case of certain endowed benefices the right to nominate the incumbent was vested in individuals, usually of the nobility, and was hereditary in their family. This is the so-called jus patronum, or "right of patronage." The complaint that this right is disregarded is frequent in the Gravamina of 1521.

[3] Commendation was one of the practices by which the pope evaded the provision of the canon law which prescribed that the same man should not hold two livings with the cure of souls. The man who received an office in commendam was not required to fulfil the duties attached to the position and when a living or an abbacy was granted in this way during the incumbency of another, the recipient received its entire income during a subsequent vacancy. The practice was most common in the case of abbacies. At the Diet of Worms (1521), Duke George of Saxony, an outspoken opponent of Luther, was as emphatic in his protest against this practice as Luther himself (Wrede, op. cit., II, 665); his protest was incorporated in the Gravamina (ibid., 672), and reappears in the Appendix (ibid., 708).

monastery or church to a cardinal or to another of his people, just as though I were to give you a hundred gulden to keep. This is not called the giving or bestowing of the monastery nor even its destruction, or the abolition of the worship of God, but only "giving it into keeping"; not that he to whom it is entrusted is to care for it, or build it up, but he is to drive out the incumbent, to receive the goods and revenues, and to install some apostate, renegade monk,[1] who accepts five or six gulden a year and sits in the church all day selling pictures and images to the pilgrims, so that henceforth neither prayers nor masses are said there. If this were to be called destroying monasteries and abolishing the worship of God, then the pope would have to be called a destroyer of Christendom and an abolisher of God's worship, because this is his constant practice. That would be a hard saying at Rome, and so we must call it a commend or a "command to take charge" of the monastery. The pope can every year make commends out of four or more of these monasteries, a single one of which may have an income of more than six thousand gulden. This is the way the Romans increase the worship of God and preserve the monasteries. The Germans also are beginning to find it out.

Incorporation

Third, There are some benefices which they call incompatibilia,[2] and which, according to the ordinances of the canon law, cannot be held by one man at the same time, as for instance, two parishes, two bishoprics and the like. In these cases the Holy Roman See of Avarice evades the canon law by making "glosses,"[3] called unio

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[1] A monk who deserted his monastery was known as an "apostate."

[2] i. e., Offices which cannot be united in the hands of one man. See e. g., note 3, p. 91.

[3] A gloss is a note explanatory of a word or passage of doubtful meaning. The glosses are the earliest form of commentary on the Bible. The glosses of the canon law are the more or less authoritative comments of the teachers, and date from the time when the study of the canon law became a part of the theological curriculum. Their aim is chiefly to show how the law applies to practical cases which may arise. The so-called glossa ordinaria had in Luther's time an authority almost equal to that of the corpus juris itself. Cf. Cath. Encyc., VI, pp. 588 f.

and incorporatio, i. e., by "incorporating" many incompatibilia, so that each becomes a part of every other and all of them together are looked upon as though they were one living. They are then no longer "incompatible," and the holy canon law is satisfied, in that it is no longer binding, except upon those who do not buy these "glosses"[1] from the pope or his datarius.[2] The unio, i. e., "uniting," is of the same nature. The pope binds many such benefices together like a bundle of sticks, and by virtue of this bond they are all regarded as one benefice. So there is at Rome one courtesan[3] who holds, for himself alone, 22 parishes, 7 priories and 44 canonries besides,—all by the help of that masterly "gloss," which holds that this is not illegal. What cardinals and other prelates have, everyone may imagine for himself. In this way the Germans are to have their purses eased and their itch cured. **Union**

Another of the "glosses" is the administratio, i. e., a man may have beside his bishopric, an abbacy or a dignity,[4] and possess all the property which goes with it, only he has no other title than that of "administrator."[5] For at Rome it is sufficient that words are changed and not the things they stand for; as though I were to teach that a bawdy-house keeper should have the name of "burgomaster's wife," and yet continue to ply her trade. This kind of Roman rule St. Peter foretold when he said, in II Peter ii: "There shall come false teachers, who in covetousness, with feigned words, shall make merchandise of you, to get their gains." **Administration** 2 Pet. 2:3

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[1] The thing which was bought was, of course, the dispensation, or permission to avail oneself of the gloss.

[2] Dataria is the name for that department of the curia which had to deal with the granting of dispensations and the disposal of benefices. Datarius is the title of the official who presided over this department.

[3] See above, p. 88, note 2. For a catalogue of papal appointments bestowed upon two "courtesans," Johannes Zink und Johannes Ingenwinkel, see SCHULTE, Die Fugger in Rom, I, pp. 282 ff, 291 ff. Between 1513 and 1521, Zink received 56 appointments, and Ingenwinkel received, between 1496 and 1521, no fewer than 106.

[4] See above, p. 87, note 1.

[5] So Albrecht of Mainz bore the title of "administrator" of Halberstadt.

Regression

Again, dear Roman Avarice has invented the custom of selling and bestowing livings to such advantage that the seller or disposer retains reversionary rights[1] upon them: to wit, if the incumbent dies, the benefice freely reverts to him who previously sold, bestowed or surrendered it. In this way they have made livings hereditary property, so that henceforth no one can come into possession of them, except the man to whom the seller is willing to dispose of them, or to whom he bequeaths his rights at death. Besides, there are many who transfer to others the mere title to a benefice from which those who get the title derive not a heller of income. It is now an old custom, too, to give another man a benefice and to reserve a certain part out of the annual revenue.[2] In olden times this was simony.[3] Of these things there are so many more that they cannot all be counted. They treat livings more shamefully than the heathen beneath the cross treated the garments of Christ.

Matt. 27:35

Yet all that has hitherto been said is ancient history and an every-day occurrence at Rome. Avarice has devised one thing more, which may, I hope, be his last morsel, and choke him. The pope has a noble little device called pectoralis reservatio, i. e., his "mental reservation," and proprius motus, i. e., the "arbitrary will of his authority."[4] It goes like this. When one man

Reservation in pectore

[1] The name of this practice was "regression" (regressus).

[2] The complaint was made at Worms (1521) that it was impossible for a German to secure a clear title to a benefice at Rome unless he applied for it in the name of an Italian, to whom he was obliged to pay a percentage of the income, a yearly pension, or a fixed sum of money for the use of his name (Wrede, op. cit., II, 712).

[3] Simony—the sin of Simon Magus (Acts 8:18–20)—the sin committed by the sale or the purchase of an office or position which is formally conferred by a ritual act of the Church. In the ancient and earlier mediæval Church the use of money to secure preferment was held to invalidate the title of the guilty party to the position thus secured, and the acceptance of money for such a purpose was an offence punishable by deposition and degradation. The "heresy of Simon" was conceived to be the greatest of all heresies. The traffic in Church offices, which became a flagrant abuse from the time of John XXII (1316–1334), would have been regarded in earlier days as the most atrocious simony.

[4] The reservatio mentalis or in pectore is the natural consequence of the papal theory that the right of appointment to all Church offices of every grade belongs to the pope (see above, p. 86, note 3). According to the theory

has gotten a benefice at Rome, and the appointment has been regularly signed and sealed, according to custom, and there comes another, who brings money, or has laid the pope under obligation in some other way, of which we will not speak, and desires of the pope the same benefice, then the pope takes it from the first man and gives it to the second.[1] If it is said that this is unjust, then the Most Holy Father must make some excuse, that he may not be reproved for doing such open violence to the law, and says that in his mind and heart he had reserved that benefice to himself and his own plenary disposal, although he had never before in his whole life either thought or heard of it. Thus he has now found a little "gloss" by which he can, in his own person, lie and deceive, and make a fool and an ape of anybody—all this he does brazenly and openly, and yet he wishes to be the head of Christendom, though with his open lies he lets the Evil Spirit rule him.

This arbitrary will and lying "reservation" of the pope creates in Rome a state of affairs which is unspeakable. There is buying, selling, bartering, trading, trafficking, lying, deceiving, robbing, stealing, luxury, harlotry, knavery, and every sort of contempt of God, and even the rule of Antichrist could not be more scandalous. Venice, Antwerp, Cairo[2] are nothing compared to this fair which is held at Rome and the business which is done there,

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of the canonists (LANCELOTTI, Institutiones juris canonici, Lib. I, Tit. XXVII) this right is exercised either per petitionem alterius, i. e., by confirmation of the election, appointment, etc., of others, or proprio motu, i. e., "on his own motion." In ordinary cases the exercise of the appointing power was limited by rules, which though bitterly complained of (see above, pp. 86 ff, and notes), were generally understood, but the theory allowed any given case to be made an exception to the rules. Of such a case it was said that it was "reserved in the heart of the Pope," and the appointment was then made "on his own motion." Hutten says of this reservatio in pectore that "it is an easy, agile and slippery thing, and bears no comparison to any other form of cheating" (Ed. BÖCKING, IV, 215).

[1] For a similar instance quoted at Worms (1521), see WREDE, op. cit., II, 710.

[2] The three chief centers of foreign commerce in the XV and the early XVI Century. The annual fairs (Jahrmarkt), held at stated times in various cities, brought great numbers of merchants together from widely distant points, and were the times when the greater part of the wholesale business for the year was done.

except that in those other places they still observe right and reason. At Rome everything goes as the devil wills, and out of this ocean like virtue flows into all the world. Is it a wonder that such people fear a reformation and a free council, and prefer to set all kings and princes at enmity rather than have them unite and bring about a council? Who could bear to have such knavery exposed if it were his own?

The Dataria

Finally, for all this noble commerce the pope has built a warehouse, namely, the house of the d a t a r i u s ,[1] in Rome. Thither all must come who deal after this fashion in benefices and livings. From him they must buy their "glosses"[2] and get the power to practice such archknavery. In former times Rome was generous, and then justice had either to be bought or else suppressed with money, but now she has become exorbitant, and no one dare be a knave unless with a great sum he has first bought the right. If that is not a brothel above all the brothels one can imagine, then I do not know what brothel means.

If you have money in this house, then you can come by all the things I have said; and not only these, but all sorts of usury[3] are here made honest, for a consideration, and the possession of all property acquired by theft or robbery is legalised. Here vows are dissolved; here monks are granted liberty to leave their orders; here marriage is on sale to the clergy; here bastards can become legitimate; here all dishonor and shame can come to honor; all ill-repute and stigma of evil are here knighted and ennobled; here is permitted the marriage which is within the forbidden degrees or has some other defect.[4] Oh! what a taxing and a robbing rules there! It looks as though all the laws of the Church were made for one purpose only—to be noth-

[1] Built by Innocent VIII (1484–1490).

[2] See above, p. 93, note 2.

[3] The Church law forbade the taking of interest on loans of money.

[4] During the Middle Ages all questions touching marriage and divorce, including, therefore, the question of the legitimacy of children, were governed by the laws of the Church, on the theory that marriage was a sacrament.

ing but so many money-snares, from which a man must extricate himself,[1] if he would be a Christian. Yea, here the devil becomes a saint, and a god to boot. What heaven and earth cannot, that this house can do! They call them compositiones[2]! "Compositions" indeed! rather "confusions"! Oh, what a modest tax is the Rhine-toll,[3] compared with the tribute taken by this holy house!

Let no one accuse me of exaggeration! It is all so open that even at Rome they must confess the evil to be greater and more terrible than any one can say. I have not yet stirred up the hell-broth of personal vices, nor do I intend to do so. I speak of things which are common talk, and yet I have not words to tell them all. The bishops, the priests and, above all, the doctors in the universities, who draw their salaries for this purpose, should have done their duty and with common consent have written and cried out against these things; but they have done the very opposite.[4]

The Fuggers

There remains one last word, and I must say that too. Since boundless Avarice has not been satisfied with all these treasures, which three great kings might well think sufficient, he now begins to transfer this trade and sell it to Fugger of Augsburg,[5] so that the lending and trading and buying of bishoprics and benefices, and the driving of bargains in spiritual goods has now come to the right place, and spiritual and temporal goods have become one business. And now I would fain hear of a mind so lofty that it could imagine

[1] i. e., By buying dispensations.

[2] The sums paid for special dispensations were so called.

[3] The toll which the "robber-barons" of the Rhine levied upon merchants passing through their domains.

[4] Ja wend das blat umb szo findistu es—The translators have adopted the interpretation of O. Clemen, L's. Werke, I, 383.

[5] The Fuggers of Augsburg were the greatest of the German capitalists in the XVI Century. They were international bankers, "the Rothschilds of the XVI Century." Their control of large capital enabled them to advance large sums of money to the territorial rulers, who were in a chronic state of need. In return for these favors they received monopolistic concessions by which their capital was further increased. The spiritual, as well as the temporal lords, availed themselves regularly of the services of this accommodating firm. They were the pope's financial representatives in Germany. On their connection with the indulgence against which Luther protested, see Vol. I, p. 21; on their relations with the papacy, see Schulte, Die Fugger in Rom, 2 Vols., Leipzig, 1904.

what this Roman Avarice might yet be able to do and has not already done; unless Fugger were to transfer or sell this combination of two lines of business to somebody else. I believe we have reached the limit.

As for what they have stolen in all lands and still steal and extort, by means of indulgences, bulls, letters of confession,[1] "butter-letters"[2] and other confessionalia,[3] —all this I consider mere patch-work, and like casting a single devil more into hell.[4] Not that they bring in little, for a mighty king could well support himself on their returns, but they are not to be compared with the streams of treasure above mentioned. I shall also say nothing at present of how this indulgence money has been applied. Another time I shall inquire about that, for Campoflore[5] and Belvidere[6] and certain other places probably know something about it.

Since, then, such devilish rule is not only open robbery and deceit, and the tyranny of the gates of hell, but also ruins Christendom in body and soul, it is our duty to use all diligence in protecting Christendom against such misery and destruction. If we would fight the Turks, let us make a beginning here, where they are at their worst. If we justly hang thieves and behead robbers, why should we let Roman Avarice go free? For he is the greatest thief and robber that has come or can come into the world, and all in the holy Name of Christ and of St. Peter! Who can longer

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[1] Certificates entitling the holder to choose his own confessor and authorizing the confessor to absolve him from certain classes of "reserved" sins; referred to in the XCV Theses as confessionalia. Cf. Vol. I, p. 22.

[2] Certificates granting their possessor permission to eat milk, eggs, butter and cheese on fast days.

[3] The word is used here in the broad sense, and means dispensations of all sorts, including those just mentioned, relating to penance.

[4] Equivalent to "carrying coals to Newcastle."

[5] The Campo di Fiore, a Roman market-place, restored and adorned at great expense by Eugenius IV (1431–1447), and his successors.

[6] A part of the Vatican palace notorious as the banqueting-hall of Alexander VI (1492–1503), turned by Julius II (1503–1513) into a museum for the housing of his wonderful and expensive collection of ancient works of art. Luther is hinting that the indulgence money has been spent on these objects rather than on the maintenance of the Church. Cf. Clemen, I, 384, note 15.

endure it or keep silence? Almost everything he owns has been gotten by theft and robbery; that is the truth, and all history shows it. The pope never got by purchase such great properties that from his officia[1] alone he can raise about a million ducats, not to mention the mines of treasure named above and the income of his lands. Nor did it come to him by inheritance from Christ or from St. Peter; no one ever loaned it or gave it to him; it has not become his by virtue of immemorial use and enjoyment. Tell me, then, whence he can have it? Learn from this what they have in mind when they send out legates to collect money for use against the Turks.

III. Proposals for Reform

Now, although I am too small a man to make propositions which might effect a reform in this dreadful state of things, nevertheless I may as well sing my fool's song to the end, and say, so far as I am able, what could and should be done by the temporal authorities or by a general council.

Abolition of Annates

1. Every prince, nobleman and city should boldly forbid their subjects to pay the annates to Rome and should abolish them entirely;[2] for the pope has broken the compact, and made the annates a robbery, to the injury and shame of the whole German nation. He gives them to his friends, sells them for large amounts of money, and uses them to endow offices. He has thus lost his right to them, and deserves punishment. It is therefore the duty of the temporal authorities to protect the innocent and prevent injustice, as Paul teaches in Romans xiii, and St. Peter in I Peter ii, and even the canon law in Case 16, Question 7, de filiis.[3] Thus it has come about that men are saying

Rom. 13:4
1 Pet. 2:14

[1] i. e., The offices and positions in Rome which were for sale. See Benrath, p. 88, note 18; p. 95, note 36.

[2] See above, p. 84, note 1.

[3] The passage is chapter 31, Filiis vel nepotibus. It provides that in case the income of endowments bequeathed to the Church is misused, and appeals to the bishop and archbishop fail to correct the misuse, the heirs of the testator may appeal to the royal courts. Luther wishes this principle applied to the annates.

to the pope and his followers, T u o r a, "Thou shalt pray"; to the emperor and his followers, T u p r o t e g e, "Thou shalt guard"; to the common man, T u l a b o r a, "Thou shalt work." Not, however, as though everyone were not to pray, guard and work; for the man who is diligent in his calling is praying, guarding and working in all that he does, but everyone should have his own especial task.

Prohibition of Roman Appointments

2. Since the pope with his Roman practices—his commends,[1] adjutories;[2] reservations,[3] g r a t i a e e x p e c t a t i v a e,[4] papal months,[5] incorporations,[6] unions,[7] p a l l i a,[8] rules in chancery,[9] and such like knavery—usurps all the German foundations without authority and right, and gives and sells them to foreigners at Rome, who do nothing in German lands to earn them; and since he thereby robs the ordinaries[10] of their rights, makes the bishops mere ciphers and figure-heads, and acts against his own canon law, against nature and against reason, until it has finally gone so far that out of sheer avarice the livings and benefices are sold to gross, ignorant asses and knaves at Rome, while pious and learned folk have no profit of their wisdom and merit, so that the poor people of the German nation have to go without good and learned prelates and thus go to ruin:

Therefore, the Christian nobility should set itself against the pope as against a common enemy and destroyer of

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[1] See above, pp. 91 f.

[2] See above, p. 91.

[3] See above, p. 94.

[4] i. e., Promises to bestow on certain persons livings not yet vacant. Complaint of the evils arising out of the practice was continually heard from the year 1416. For the complaints made at Worms (1521), see WREDE, o p . c i t., II, 710.

[5] See above, pp. 86 f.

[6] See above, pp. 92 f.

[7] See above, p. 93.

[8] See above, p. 89.

[9] Rules for the transaction of papal business, including such matters as appointments and the like. At Worms (1521) the Estates complain that these rules are made to the advantage of the "courtesans" and the disadvantage of the Germans. (WREDE, o p . c i t., II, pp. 675 f.)

[10] The local Church authorities, here equivalent to "the bishops." On use of term see R e a l e n c y k., XIV, 424.

Christendom, and should do this for the salvation of the poor souls who must go to ruin through his tyranny. They should ordain, order, and decree, that henceforth no benefice shall be drawn into the hands of Rome, and that hereafter no appointment shall be obtained there in any manner whatsoever, but that the benefices shall be brought out and kept out from under this tyrannical authority; and they should restore to the ordinaries the right and office of ordering these benefices in the German nation as best they may. And if a "courtesan" were to come from Rome, he should receive a strict command either to keep his distance, or else to jump into the Rhine or the nearest river, and take the Roman ban, with its seals and letters, to a cold bath. They would then take note at Rome that the Germans are not always mad and drunken, but that they have really become Christians, and intend to permit no longer the mockery and scorn of the holy name of Christ, under which all this knavery and destruction of souls goes on, but have more regard to God and His glory than to the authority of men.

Restoration of Local Church Rights

3. An imperial law should be issued, that no bishop's cloak[1] and no confirmation of any dignity[2] whatsoever shall henceforth be secured from Rome, but that the ordinance of the most holy and most famous Council of Nicaea[3] shall be restored, in which it is decreed that a bishop shall be confirmed by the two nearest bishops or by the archbishop. If the pope will break the statutes of this and of all other councils, what is the use of holding councils; or who has given him the authority thus to despise and break the rules of councils?

If he has this power then we should depose all bishops, archbishops and primates[4] and make them mere parish-

[1] The sign of the episcopal office; as regards archbishops, the pallium; see above, p. 89, and note.

[2] See above, p. 87, note 1.

[3] The first of the ecumenical councils (A. D. 325). The decree to which Luther here refers is canon IV o that Council. Cf. KÖHLER, L. und die Kg., pp. 139 ff.

[4] The primate is the ranking archbishop of a country.

priests, so that the pope alone may be over them, as he now is. He leaves to bishops, archbishops and primates no regular authority or office, usurps everything for himself, and lets them keep only the name and empty title. It has gone so far that by his "exemptions"[1] the monasteries, the abbots and the prelates are withdrawn from the regular authority of the bishops, so that there is no longer any order in Christendom. From this must follow what has followed—relaxation of discipline and license to do evil everywhere—so that I verily fear the pope can be called the "man of sin."[2] There is in Christendom no discipline, no rule, no order; and who is to blame except the pope? This usurped authority of his he applies strictly to all the prelates, and takes away their rods; and he is generous to all subjects, giving them or selling them their liberty.

2 Thess. 2:3

Nevertheless, for fear he may complain that he is robbed of his authority, it should be decreed that when the primates or archbishops are unable to settle a case, or when a controversy arises among themselves, such a case must be laid before the pope, but not every little matter.[3] Thus it was done in olden times, and thus the famous Council of Nicaea decreed.[4] If a case can be settled without the pope, then his Holiness should not be troubled with such minor matters, but give himself to that prayer, meditation and care for all Christendom, of which he boasts. This is what the

[1] "Exemption" was the practice by which monastic houses were withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the bishops and made directly subject to the pope. The practice seems to have originated in the X Century with the famous monastery of Cluny (918), but it was almost universal in the case of the houses of the mendicant orders. The bishops made it a constant subject of complaint, and the Lateran Council (Dec. 19, 1516) passed a decree abolishing all monastic exemptions, though the decree does not seem to have been effective. See CREIGHTON, History of the Papacy, V, 266.

[2] i. e., Antichrist. See above, p. 73, note 2.

[3] The papal interference in the conduct of the local Church courts was as flagrant as in the appointments, of which Luther has heretofore spoken. At Worms (1521) it was complained that cases were cited to Rome as a court of first instance, and the demand was made that a regular course of appeals should be re-established. WREDE, op. cit., II, 672, 718.

[4] The reference is Canon V of the Council of Sardica (A. D. 343), incorporated in the canon law as a canon of Nicaea (P t. II, q u. 6, c. 5). See KÖHLER, L. und die Kg., 151.

Apostles did. They said, "It is not meet that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables, but we will keep to preaching and prayer and set others over the work." But now Rome stands for nothing else than the despising of the Gospel and of prayer, and for the serving of "tables," i. e., of temporal affairs, and the rule of the Apostles and of the pope agree as Christ agrees with Lucifer, heaven with hell, night with day; yet he is called "Vicar of Christ and Successor of the Apostles." Acts 6:2

4. It should be decreed that no temporal matter shall be taken to Rome,[1] but that all such cases shall be left to the temporal authorities, as the Romans themselves decree in that canon law of theirs, which they do not keep. For it should be the duty of the pope, as the man most learned in the Scriptures and most Holy, not in name only, but in truth, to administer affairs which concern the faith and holy life of Christians, to hold the primates and archbishops to these things, and to help them in dealing with and caring for these matters. So St. Paul teaches in I Corinthians vi, and takes the Corinthians severely to task for their concern with worldly things. For it works intolerable injury to all lands that such cases are tried at Rome. It increases the costs, and moreover the judges do not know the manners, laws and customs of the various countries, so that they often do violence to the facts and base their decisions on their own laws and opinions, and thus injustice is inevitably done the contestants. **Exclusion of Temporal Matters from the Papal Court** 1 Cor. 6:7

Moreover, the outrageous extortion practised by the officiales[2] must be forbidden in all the dioceses, so that they may attend to nothing else than matters of faith and good morals, and leave to the temporal judges **and from Bishops' Courts**

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[1] i. e., Appealed to Rome for decision. This is the subject of the first of the 102 Gravamina of 1521 (Wrede, op. cit., II, 672).

[2] The judges in the bishops' courts. The complaint is that they interfere with the administration of justice by citing into their courts cases which properly belong in the lay courts, and enforce their verdicts (usually fines) by means of ecclesiastical censures. The charges against these courts are specified in the Gravamina of 1521, Nos. 73–100 (Wrede, op. cit., II, 694–703).

the things that concern money, property, life and honor. The temporal authorities, therefore, should not permit sentences of ban or exile when faith or right life is not concerned. Spiritual authorities should have rule over spiritual goods, as reason teaches; but spiritual goods are not money, nor anything pertaining to the body, but they are faith and good works.

A German Church Organization

Nevertheless it might be granted that cases which concern benefices or livings should be tried before bishops, archbishops and primates. Therefore, in order to decide contests and contentions, it might be possible for the Primate of Germany to maintain a general consistory, with auditors and chancellors, which should have control over the signaturae gratiae and signaturae justitiae,[1] that are now controlled at Rome, and which should be the final court of appeal for German cases. The officers of this consistory must not, however, be paid, as at Rome, by chance presents and gifts, and thereby acquire the habit of selling justice and injustice, which they now have to do at Rome because the pope gives them no remuneration, but allows them to fatten themselves on presents. For at Rome no one cares what is right or not right, but only what is money or not money. This court might, however, be paid out of the annates, or some other way might easily be devised, by those who are more intelligent and who have more experience in these matters than I. All I wish to do is to arouse and set to thinking those who have the ability and the inclination to help the German nation become once more free and Christian, after the wretched, heathenish and unchristian rule of the pope.

Abolition of Reservations

5. No more reservations should be valid, and no more benefices should be seized by Rome, even if the incumbent dies, or there is a contest, or the incumbent is a "servant" of a cardinal or of the pope;[2] and it should be strictly for-

[1] The signatura gratiae and the signatura justitiae were the bureaus through which the pope regulated those matters of administration which belonged to his own special prerogative.

[2] See above, pp. 88 f.

bidden and prevented that any "courtesan"[1] should institute a contest over any benefice, so as to cite pious priests to Rome, harass them and drive them into lawsuits. If, in consequence of this prohibition, there should come from Rome a ban or an ecclesiastical censure, it should be disregarded, just as though a thief were to lay a man under the ban because he would not let him steal. Indeed they should be severely punished because they so blasphemously misuse the ban and the name of God to support their robbery, and with falsely devised threats would drive us to endure and to praise such blasphemy of God's name and such abuse of Christian authority, and thus to become, in the sight of God, partakers in their rascality; it is our duty before God to resist it, for St. Paul, in Romans i, re- Rom. 1:32
proves as guilty of death not only "those who do such things," but also those who consent to such things and allow them to be done. Most unbearable of all is the lying reservatio pectoralis,[2] whereby Christendom is so scandalously and openly put to shame and scorn, because its head deals in open lies, and out of love for the accursed money, shamelessly deceives and fools everybody.

Abolition of Reserved Cases

6. The casus reservati,[3] the "reserved cases," should also be abolished, for not only are they the means of extorting much money from the people, but by means of them the ravening tyrants ensnare and confuse many poor consciences, to the intolerable injury of their faith in God. This is especially true of the ridiculous and childish cases about which they make so much ado in the Bull Coena Domini,[4] and which are not worth calling daily sins, still

[1] See above, p. 88, note 3.

[2] See above, p. 94.

[3] i. e., The cases in which a priest was forbidden to give absolution. The reference here is to cases in which only the pope could absolve. Cf. The XCV Theses, Vol. I, p. 30.

[4] A papal bull published annually at Rome on Holy Thursday. It was directed against heretics, but to the condemnation of the heretics and their heresies was added a list of offences which could receive absolution only from the pope, or by his authorisation. In 1522 Luther translated this bull into German as a New Year present for the pope (Weimar Ed., VIII, 691). On Luther's earlier utterances concerning it, see KÖHLER, L. u. die Kg., pp. 59 ff.

less cases so grave that the pope may not remit them by any indulgence; as for example, hindering a pilgrim on his way to Rome, furnishing weapons to the Turks, or tampering with papal letters. With such gross, crazy, clumsy things do they make fools of us! Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the sins which are committed and can be committed against the commandments of God are not reserved cases; but sins against what God has never commanded and what they have themselves devised, these must be reserved cases, solely that no one be hindered in bringing money to Rome, in order that, safe from the Turks, they may live in luxury and keep the world under their tyranny with their wanton, useless bulls and breves.[1]

All priests ought rightly to know, or else there should be a public ordinance to that effect, that no secret sin, of which a man has not been publicly accused, is a reserved case, and that every priest has the power to remit all sorts of sins, however they may be called, so long as they are secret; moreover that no abbot, bishop or pope has the power to reserve any such case to himself.[2] If they attempt it, their reservation does not hold and is not valid, and they should be reproved, as men who without authority interfere in God's judgment, and without cause ensnare and burden poor, ignorant consciences. But if great public sins are committed, especially sins against God's commandments, then there is indeed a reason for reserved cases, but even then there should not be too many of them, and they should not be reserved arbitrarily and without cause; for Christ
1 Pet. 5:3 has set in His Church not tyrants, but shepherds, as saith St. Peter.

Diminution of the Papal Household

7. The Roman See should also do away with the officia,[3] and diminish the swarm of vermin at Rome, so that the pope's household can be supported by the pope's own purse. The pope should not allow his court to surpass

[1] The breve is a papal decree, of equal authority with the bull, but differing from it in form, and usually dealing with matters of smaller importance.

[2] Cf. Luther's earlier statement to the same effect in A Discussion of Confession, Vol. I, pp. 96 f.

[3] See above, p. 99.

in pomp and extravagance the courts of all kings, seeing that such a condition not only has never been serviceable to the cause of Christian faith, but the courtiers have been kept thereby from study and prayer, until they are scarce able to speak about the faith at all. This they proved quite plainly at the last Roman Council,[1] in which, amongst many other childish and frivolous things, they decreed that the soul of man is immortal and that every priest must say his prayers once a month on pain of losing his benefice. How shall matters which concern faith and the Church be decided by people so hardened and blinded by great avarice, wealth and worldly splendor, that they have only now decreed that the soul is immortal? It is no small shame to all Christians that at Rome they deal so disgracefully with the faith. If they had less wealth and pomp, they could pray and study better, and so become worthy and able to deal with matters of faith, as was the case in olden times when they were bishops, and did not presume to be kings over all kings.

Bishops' Oaths

8. The hard and terrible oaths should be abolished, which the bishops are wrongfully compelled to render to the pope,[2] and by which they are bound like servants, as that worthless and unlearned chapter, Significasti[3], arbitrarily and most stupidly decrees. It is not enough that they burden us in body, soul and property with their many mad laws, by which faith is weakened and Christendom ruined; but they seize upon the person and office and work of the bishops, and now upon the investiture[4] also, which was in olden times the right of the German emperors, and in France and other kingdoms still belongs to the kings.

[1] The Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17).

[2] See above, p. 90, note 1.

[3] In the canon law, Decretal. Greg. lib. i, tit. 6, cap. 4. The decretal forbids the bestowing of the pallium (see above, p. 89, note 3) on an archbishop elect, until he shall first have sworn allegiance to the Holy See.

[4] The induction of Church officials into office. The term was used particularly of the greater offices—those of bishop and abbot. These offices carried with them the enjoyment of certain incomes, and the possession of certain temporal powers. For this reason the right of investiture was a bone of contention between popes and emperors during the Middle Ages.

On this point they had great wars and disputes with the emperors,[1] until at last, with impudent authority, they took the right and have kept it until now; just as though the Germans, above all the Christians on earth, had to be the puppets of the pope and the Roman See and do and suffer what no one else will do and suffer. Since, then, this is sheer violence and robbery, hindering the regular authority of the bishops and injuring poor souls, therefore the emperor and his nobles are in duty bound to prevent and punish such tyranny.

Pope and Emperor

9. The pope should have no authority over the emperor, except that he anoints and crowns him at the altar, just as a bishop anoints and crowns a king;[2] and we should not henceforth yield to that devilish pride which compels the emperor to kiss the pope's feet or sit at his feet, or, as they claim, hold his stirrup or the bridle of his mule when he mounts for a ride; still less should he do homage and swear faithful allegiance to the pope, as the popes have shamelessly ventured to demand as if they possessed that right. The chapter S o l i t e ,[3] in which the papal authority is raised above the imperial authority, is not worth a h e l l e r , nor are any of those who rest upon it or fear it; for it does nothing else than force the holy words of God out of their true meaning, and wrest them to human dreams, as I have showed in a Latin treatise.[4]

Such extravagant, over-presumptuous, and more than wicked doings of the pope have been devised by the devil, in order that under their cover he may in time bring in Antichrist, and raise the pope above God, as many are already doing and have done. It is not proper for the pope

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[1] Especially in the time of the Emperors Henry IV and V (1056–1125).

[2] The German Empire was regarded during the Middle Ages as a continuation of the Roman Empire. (See below, p. 153.) The right to crown an emperor was held to be the prerogative of the pope; until the pope bestowed the imperial crown, the emperor bore the title, "King of the Romans."

[3] In the canon law, D e c r e t a l . G r e g . l i b . i , t i t . 3 3 , c a p . 6 .

[4] In the treatise, R e s o l u t i o L u t h e r i a n a s u p e r p r o p o s i t i o n e XIII, de potestate papae (1520). W e i m a r E d . , II, pp. 217 ff.; E r l . E d . , o p . v a r . a r g . , III, pp. 293 ff.

to exalt himself above the temporal authorities, save only in spiritual offices such as preaching and absolving. In other things he is to be subject, as Paul and Peter teach, in Romans xiii, and I Peter iii, and as I have said above.[1] Rom. 13:1 1 Pet. 2:13 f.

He is not vicar of Christ in heaven, but of Christ as He walked on earth.[2] For Christ in heaven, in the form of a ruler, needs no vicar, but He sits and sees, does, and knows all things, and has all power. But He needs a vicar in the form of a servant, in which He walked on earth, toiling, preaching, suffering and dying. Now they turn it around, take from Christ the heavenly form of ruler and give it to the pope, leaving the form of a servant to perish utterly. He might almost be the "Counter-christ" whom the Scriptures call Antichrist, for all his nature, work and doings are against Christ, for the destruction of Christ's nature and work. Phil. 2:7

It is also ridiculous and childish that the pope, with such perverted and deluded reasoning, boasts in his decretal P a s t o r a l i s ,[3] that he is rightful heir to the Empire, in case of a vacancy. Who has given him this right? Did Christ, when He said, "The princes of the Gentiles are lords, but ye shall not be so"? Did St. Peter will it to him? It vexes me that we must read and learn such shameless, gross, crazy lies in the canon law, and must even hold them for Christian doctrine, when they are devilish lies. Luke 22:25 f.

Of the same sort is also that unheard-of lie about the "Donation of Constantine."[4] It must have been some spe-

[1] See p. 70. [2] Cf. The Papacy at Rome, Vol. I, pp. 357 f.

[3] A decree of Pope Clement V of 1313, incorporated subsequently in the canon law, C l e m e n t . l i b . i i , t i t . 1 1 , c a p . 2 .

[4] A forged document of the VIII Century, professing to come from the hand of the Emperor Constantine (306–337). The Donation conveyed to the pope title to the city of Rome (the capital had been removed to Constantinople), certain lands in Italy and "the islands of the sea." It was used by the popes of the Middle Ages to support their claims to worldly power, and its genuineness was not disputed. In 1440, however, Laurentius Valla, an Italian humanist, published a work in which he proved that the Donation was a forgery. This work was republished in Germany by Ulrich von Hutten in 1517, and seems to have come to Luther's attention in the early part of 1520, just before the composition of the present treatise (Cf. ENDERS II, 332). Luther subsequently (1537) issued an annotated translation of the text of the Donation (E r l . E d . , XXV, pp. 176 ff.).

cial plague of God that so many people of understanding have let themselves be talked into accepting such lies as these, which are so manifest and clumsy that I should think any drunken peasant could lie more adroitly and skilfully. How can a man rule an empire and at the same time continue to preach, pray, study and care for the poor? Yet these are the duties which properly and peculiarly belong to the pope, and they were imposed by Christ in such earnest that He even forbade His disciples to take with them cloak or money, since these duties can scarcely be performed by one who has to rule even a single household. Yet the pope would rule an empire and continue to be pope! This is a device of the knaves who would like, under the pope's name, to be lords of the world, and by means of the pope and the name of Christ, to restore the Roman Empire to its former state.

Matt. 10:10

Temporal Power—the Kingdom of Naples

10. The pope should restrain himself, take his fingers out of the pie, and claim no title to the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily.[1] He has exactly as much right to that kingdom as I have, and yet he wishes to be its overlord. It is plunder got by violence, like almost all his other possessions. The emperor, therefore, should not grant him this fief, and if it has been granted, he should no longer give his consent to it, and should point him instead to the Bible and the prayer-books, so that he may preach and pray, and leave to temporal lords the ruling of lands and peoples, especially when no one has given them to him.

The States of the Church

The same opinion should hold as regards Bologna, Imola, Vicenza, Ravenna and all the territories in the Mark of Ancona, in Romagna, and in other Italian lands,

[1] The papal claim to temporal sovereignty over this little kingdom, which comprised the island of Sicily and certain territories in Southern Italy, goes back to the XI Century, and was steadily asserted during the whole of the later Middle Ages. It was one of the questions at issue in the conflict between the Emperor Frederick II (1200–1260) and the popes, and played an important part in the history of the stormy times which followed the fall of the Hohenstaufen. The popes claimed the right to award the kingdom to a ruler who would swear allegiance to the Holy See. The right to the kingdom was at this time contested between the royal houses of France and of Spain, of which latter house the Emperor Charles V was the head.

which the pope has taken by force and possesses without right.[1] Moreover, he has meddled in these things against all the commands of Christ and of St. Paul. For thus saith St. Paul, "No one entangleth himself with worldly affairs, whose business it is to wait upon the divine knighthood."[2] Now the pope should be the head and front of this knighthood, yet he meddles in worldly affairs more than any emperor or king. Why then he must be helped out of them and allowed to attend to his knighthood. Christ also, Whose vicar he boasts himself to be, was never willing to have aught to do with temporal rule; indeed, to one who asked of him a decision respecting his brother, He said, "Who made Me a judge over you?" But the pope rushes in unbidden, and boldly takes hold of everything as though he were a god, until he no longer knows what Christ is, Whose vicar he pretends to be.

2 Tim. 2:3

Luke 12:14

Papal Homage

11. The kissing of the pope's feet[3] should take place no more. It is an unchristian, nay, an antichristian thing for a poor sinful man to let his feet be kissed by one who is a hundred times better than himself. If it is done in honor of his authority, why does not the pope do the same to others in honor of their holiness? Compare the two—Christ and the pope! Christ washed His disciples' feet and dried them, and the disciples never washed His feet; the pope, as though he were higher than Christ, turns things around and, as a great favor, allows people to kiss his feet, though he ought properly to use all his power to prevent it,

John 13:1 ff.

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[1] The popes claimed temporal sovereignty over a strip of territory in Italy, beginning at Rome and stretching in a northeasterly direction across the peninsula to a point on the Adriatic south of Venice, including the cities and lands which Luther mentions. This formed the so-called "States of the Church." The attempt to consolidate the States and make the papal sovereignty effective involved Popes Alexander VI (1492–1503) and Julius II (1503–1513) in war and entangled them in political alliances with the European powers and petty Italian states. It resulted at last in actual war between Pope Clement VII and the Emperor Charles V (1526–1527). See Cambridge Modern History, I, 104–143; 219–252, and literature cited pp. 706–713; 727 f.

[2] A free translation of the Vulgate, Nemo militans Deo.

[3] The kissing of the pope's feet was a part of the "adoration" which he claimed as his right. See above, p. 108.

if anyone wished to do it; like Paul and Barnabas, who would not let the people of Lystra pay them divine honor, but said, "We are men like you." But our sycophants have gone so far as to make for us an idol, and now no one fears God so much as he fears the pope, no one pays Him such ceremonious honor. That they can endure! What they cannot endure is that a hair's-breadth should be taken away from the proud estate of the pope. Now if they were Christians, and held God's honor above their own, the pope would never be happy while he knew that God's honor was despised and his own exalted, and he would let no man pay him honor until he saw that God's honor was again exalted and was greater than his own.

Acts 14:11–16

[1][It is another piece of the same scandalous pride, that the pope is not satisfied to ride or to be driven in a vehicle, but although he is strong and in good health, he has himself borne by men, with unheard-of splendor, like an idol. How, pray, does such satanic pride agree with the example of Christ, Who went on foot, as did all His disciples? Where has there ever been a worldly monarch who went about in such worldly glory as he who wishes to be the head of all those who are to despise and flee worldly glory, i. e., of Christians? Not that this in itself should give us very much concern, but we should rightly fear the wrath of God, if we flatter this kind of pride and do not show our indignation. It is enough that the pope should rant and play the fool in this wise; but that we should approve it and tolerate it,—this is too much.

For what Christian heart can or ought to take pleasure in seeing that when the pope wishes to receive the communion, he sits quiet, like a gracious lord, and has the sacrament passed to him on a golden rod by a bowing cardinal on bended knee? As though the holy sacrament were not worthy that a pope, a poor stinking sinner, should rise to show God honor, when all other Christians, who are much

[1] The three paragraphs enclosed in brackets were added by Luther to the 2d edition; see Introduction, p. 59.

more holy than the Most Holy Father, the pope, receive it with all reverence! Would it be a wonder if God were to send a plague upon us all because we suffer such dishonor to be done Him by our prelates, and approve it, and by our silence or our flattery make ourselves partakers of such damnable pride?

It is the same way when he carries the sacrament in procession. He must be carried, but the sacrament is set before him, like a can of wine on the table. In short, at Rome Christ counts for nothing, the pope counts for everything; and yet they would compel us with threats to approve, and praise and honor such antichristian sins, though this is against God and against all Christian doctrine. Now God help a free Council to teach the pope that he too is a man, and is not more than God, as he presumes to be.]

Abolition of Pilgrimages to Rome

12. Pilgrimages to Rome[1] should either be abolished, or else no one should be allowed to make such a pilgrimage out of curiosity or because of a pious impulse, unless it is first recognized by his parish-priest, his town authorities or his overlord, that he has good and sufficient reason for it. I say this not because pilgrimages are bad, but because they are at this time ill-advised. For men see at Rome no good example, but only that which offends; and they have themselves made the proverb, "The nearer Rome, the worse Christians."[2] Men bring back with them contempt for God and His commandments. It is said: "The first time one goes to Rome he seeks a rascal, the second time he finds him, the third time he brings him home with him."[3] Now, however, they have become so clever that they make the three journeys at once, and they have verily brought

[1] The holy places of Rome had long been favorite objects of pilgrimage, and the practice had been zealously fostered by the popes through the institution of the "golden" or "jubilee years." Cf. Vol. I, p. 18, and below, p. 114.

[2] Cf. the Italian proverb, "God is everywhere except at Rome; there He has a vicar."

[3] Cf. Hutten's saying in Vadiscus: "Three things there are which those who go to Rome usually bring home with them, a bad conscience, a ruined stomach and an empty purse." (Ed. Böcking, IV, p. 169.)

back from Rome such pretty things that it were better never to have seen or known Rome.

Even if this reason did not exist, there is still another and a better: to wit, that by these pilgrimages men are led away into a false conceit and a misunderstanding of the divine commandments; for they think that this going on pilgrimage is a precious, good work, and this is not true. It is a very small good work, oftentimes an evil, delusive work, for God has not commanded it. But He has commanded that a man shall care for his wife and children, and look after such other duties as belong to the married state, and besides this, to serve and help his neighbor. Now it comes to pass that a man makes a pilgrimage to Rome when no one has commanded him to do so, spends fifty or a hundred gulden, more or less, and leaves his wife and child, or at least his neighbor, at home to suffer want. Yet the foolish fellow thinks to gloss over such disobedience and contempt of the divine commandments with his self-willed pilgriming, when it is really only curiosity or devilish delusion which leads him to it. The popes have helped this along with their false, feigned, foolish, "golden years,"[1] by which the people are excited, stirred up, torn away from God's commandments, and drawn toward their own deluded undertakings. Thus they have accomplished the very thing they should have forbidden; but it has brought in money and strengthened false authority, therefore it has had to continue, though it is against God and the salvation of souls.

In order to destroy in simple Christians this false, seductive faith, and to restore a true understanding of good works, all pilgrimages should be given up; for there is in them nothing good—no commandment, no obedience—but,

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[1] The "golden" or "jubilee years" were the years when special rewards were attached to worship at the shrines of Rome. The custom was instituted by Boniface VIII in 1300, and it was the intention to make every hundredth year a jubilee. In 1343 the interval between jubilees was fixed at fifty, in 1389 at thirty-three, in 1473 at twenty-five years. Cf. Vol. I, p. 18.

on the contrary, numberless occasions for sin and for the despising of God's commandments. Hence come the many beggars, who by this pilgriming carry on endless knaveries and learn the habit of begging when they are not in want. Hence, too, come vagabondage, and many other ills which I shall not now recount.

If any one, now, wishes to go on pilgrimage or take a pilgrim's vow, he should first show his reasons to his parish-priest or to his lord. If it turns out that he wishes to do it for the sake of the good work, the priest or lord should boldly tread the vow and good work under foot, as though it were a lure of the devil, and show him how to apply the money and labor necessary for the pilgrimage to the keeping of God's commandments and to works a thousandfold better, viz., by spending it on his own family or on his poor neighbors. But if he wishes to make the pilgrimage out of curiosity, to see new lands and cities, he may be allowed to do as he likes. If, however, he has made the vow while ill, then such vows ought to be forbidden and canceled, and the commandments of God exalted, and he ought to be shown that he should henceforth be satisfied with the vow he made in baptism,[1] to keep the commandments of God. And yet, in order to quiet his conscience, he may be allowed this once to perform his foolish vow. No one wants to walk in the straight and common path of God's commandments; everyone makes himself new roads and new vows, as though he had fulfilled all the commandments of God.

Reform of the Mendicant Orders

13. Next we come to that great crowd who vow much and keep little. Be not angry, dear lords! Truly, I mean it well. It is the truth, and bitter-sweet, and it is this,—the building of mendicant-houses[2] should no more be permitted. God help us, there are already far too many of them! Would to God they were all done away, or at least given over to two

[1] Cf. the statements in the Treatise on Baptism and the Discussion of Confession, Vol. I, pp. 68 ff, 98.

[2] The houses, or monasteries, of the mendicant or "begging" orders—the "friars." The members of these orders were sworn to support themselves on the alms of the faithful.

or three orders! Wandering about the land has never brought any good, and never will bring any good. It is my advice, therefore, to put together ten of these houses, or as many as may be necessary, and out of them all to make one house, which will be well provided and need no more begging. It is much more important to consider what the common people need for their salvation, than what St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Augustine[1] or any other man has decreed; especially since things have not turned out as they expected.

The mendicants should also be relieved of preaching and hearing confession, except when they are called to this work by the express desire of bishops, parishes, congregations or the temporal authorities. Out of their preaching and shriving there has come nothing but hatred and envy between priests and monks, and great offence and hindrance to the common people. For this reason it should properly and deservedly cease, because it can well be dispensed with.[2] It looks suspiciously as though it were not for nothing that the Holy Roman See has increased this army, so that the priests and bishops, tired of its tyranny, might not some time become too strong for it and begin a reformation which would not be to the liking of his Holiness.

At the same time the manifold divisions and differences within one and the same order should be abolished. These divisions have at times arisen for small reason and maintained themselves for still smaller, combatting one another with unspeakable hatred and envy.[3] Nevertheless the Christian faith, which can well exist without any of these distinctions, is lost by both sides, and a good Christian life

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[1] The three leading mendicant orders were the Franciscan (the Minorites, or "little brothers"), founded by St. Francis of Assisi (died 1226), the Dominican (the "preaching brothers"), founded by St. Dominic (died 1221), and the Augustinian Hermits, to which Luther himself belonged, and which claimed foundation by St. Augustine (died 430)..

[2] The interference of the friars in the duties of the parish clergy was a continual subject of complaint through this period.

[3] By the middle of the XV Century there were eight distinct sects within the Franciscan order alone (See Realencyk., VI, pp. 212 ff.), and Luther had himself taken part in a vigorous dispute between two parties in the Augustinian order.

is valued and sought after only in outward laws, works and forms; and this results only in the devising of hypocrisy and the destruction of souls, as everyone may see with his own eyes.

The pope must also be forbidden to found and confirm any more of these orders; nay, he must be commanded to abolish some of them and reduce their number, since the faith of Christ, which is alone the highest good and which exists without any orders, is in no small danger, because these many different works and forms easily mislead men into living for them instead of giving heed to the faith. Unless there are in the monasteries wise prelates, who preach and who concern themselves with faith more than with the rules of the orders, the order cannot but harm and delude simple souls who think only of works.

In our days, however, the prelates who have had faith and who founded the orders have almost all passed away. Just as in olden days among the children of Israel, when the fathers, who knew God's works and wonders, had passed away, the children, from ignorance of God's works and of faith, immediately became idolatrous and set up their own human works; so now, alas! these orders have lost the understanding of God's works and of faith, and only torture themselves pitifully, with labor and sorrow, in their own rules, laws and customs, and withal never come to a right understanding of a good spiritual life, as the Apostle declared when he said, in II Timothy iii: "They have the appearance of a spiritual life, yet there is nothing back of it; they are ever and ever learning, but they never come to a knowledge of what a true spiritual life is." There should be no monastery unless there were a spiritual prelate, learned in the Christian faith, to rule it, for no other kind of prelate can rule without injury and ruin, and the holier and better he appears to be in his outward works and life, the more injury and ruin he causes. 2 Tim. 3:5,7

To my way of thinking it would be a necessary measure, especially in these perilous times of ours, that all foundations

and monasteries should be re-established as they were at the first, in the days of the Apostles and for a long time afterwards, when they were all open to every man, and every man might remain in them as long as he pleased. For what were the foundations and monasteries except Christian schools in which the Scriptures and Christian living were taught, and people were trained to rule and to preach? So we read that St. Agnes[1] went to school, and we still see the same practice in some of the nunneries, like that at Quedlinburg[2] and others elsewhere. And in truth all monasteries and convents ought to be so free that God is served in them with free will and not with forced avarice. Afterward, however, they hedged them about with vows and turned them into a lifelong prison, so that these vows are thought to be of more account than the vows of baptism. What sort of fruit this has borne, we see, hear, read and learn more and more every day.

I suppose this advice of mine will be regarded as the height of foolishness; but I am not concerned about that just now. I advise what I think best; let him reject it who will! I see how the vows are kept, especially the vow of chastity, which has become so universal through these monasteries and yet is not commanded by Christ; on the contrary, it is given to very few to keep it, as He himself says, and St. Paul. I would have all men to be helped, and not have Christian souls caught in human, self-devised customs and laws.

Matt. 19:11 ff. 1 Cor. 7:7 Col. 2:20

Marriage of the Clergy

14. We also see how the priesthood has fallen, and how many a poor priest is overburdened with wife and child, and his conscience troubled, yet no one does anything to help him though he might easily be helped. Though pope and bishops may let things go as they go, and let them go to ruin if they will, I will save my conscience and open my mouth freely, whether it vex pope, bishops or any one else.

[1] St. Agnes the Martyr, put to death in the beginning of the IV Century, one of the favorite saints of the Middle Ages. See SCHÄFER, L. als Kirchenhistoriker, p. 235.

[2] One of the most famous of the German convents, founded in 936.

Wherefore I say that according to the institution of Christ and the Apostles every city should have a priest or bishop, as St. Paul clearly says in Titus i; and this priest should not be compelled to live without a wedded wife, but should be permitted to have one, as St. Paul says in I Timothy iii, and Titus i, "A bishop should be a man who is blameless, and the husband of but one wedded wife, whose children are obedient and virtuous," etc. For with St. Paul a bishop and a priest are one and the same thing, as witness also St. Jerome.[1] But of bishops as they now are the Scriptures know nothing; they have been appointed by the ordinance of the Christian Church, that one of them may rule over many priests.

Tit. 1:6

1 Tim. 3:2
Tit. 1:6

So then we clearly learn from the Apostle that it should be the custom for every town to choose out of the congregation[2] a learned and pious citizen, entrust to him the office of the ministry, and support him at the expense of the community, leaving him free choice to marry or not. He should have with him several priests or deacons, who might also be married or not, as they chose, to help him rule the people of the community[3] by means of preaching and the sacraments, as is still the practice in the Greek Church. At a later time,[4] when there were so many persecutions and controversies with heretics, there were many holy fathers who of their own accord abstained from matrimony, to the end that they might the better devote themselves to study and be prepared at any time for death or for controversy. Then the Roman See interfered, out of sheer wantonness, and made a universal commandment forbidding priests to marry.[5] This was done at the bidding of the devil, as St.

[1] The celebrated Church Father (died 420). The passages referred to are in Migne, XXII, 656, and XXVI, 562.

[2] Or "community" (Gemeine). Cf. The Papacy at Rome, Vol. I, p. 345, note 4. See also Dass eine christl. Gemeine Recht und Macht habe, etc. Weimar Ed. XI, pp. 408 ff.

[3] Or "congregation." See note 2.

[4] i. e., At a time later than that of the Apostles.

[5] The first absolute prohibition of marriage to the clergy is contained in a decree of Pope Siricius and dated 385. See H. C. Lea, History of Sacerdotal Celibacy, 3d ed. (1907), I, pp. 59 ff.

Paul declares in I Timothy iv, "There shall come teachers who bring doctrines of devils, and forbid to marry." From this has arisen so much untold misery, occasion was given for the withdrawal of the Greek Church,[1] and division, sin, shame and scandal were increased without end,—which is the result of everything the devil does.

What, then, shall we do about it? My advice is that matrimony be again made free,[2] and that every one be left free choice to marry or not to marry. In that case, however, there must be a very different government and administration of Church property, the whole canon law must go to pieces and not many benefices find their way to Rome.[3] I fear that greed has been a cause of this wretched unchaste chastity, and as a result of greed every man has wished to become a priest and everyone wants his son to study for the priesthood, not with the idea of living in chastity, for that could be done outside the priesthood, but of being supported in temporal things without care or labor,
Gen. 3:19 contrary to the command of God in Genesis iii, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." They have construed this to mean that their labor was to pray and say mass.

I am not referring here to popes, bishops, canons and monks. God has not instituted these offices. They have taken burdens on themselves; let them bear them. I would speak only of the ministry which God has instituted[4] and which is to rule a congregation by means of preaching and sacraments, whose incumbents are to live and be at home among the people. Such ministers should be granted liberty by a Christian council to marry, for the avoidance of temptation and sin. For since God has not bound them, no one else ought to bind them or can bind them, even
Gal. 1:8 though he were an angel from heaven, still less if he be only

[1] The priests of the Greek Church are required to marry, and the controversy over celibacy was involved in the division between the Greek and Roman Churches.
[2] Cf. Hutten's Vadiscus (Böcking, IV, 199).
[3] i. e., Lie in Roman appointment.
[4] i. e., The ministry in the congregation. See above, p. 119.

a pope; and everything that the canon law decrees to the contrary is mere fable and idle talk.

Furthermore, I advise that henceforth neither at his consecration to the priesthood nor at any other time shall any one under any circumstances promise the bishop to live in celibacy, but shall declare to the bishop that he has no authority to demand such a vow, and that to demand it is the devil's own tyranny.

But if anyone is compelled to say or wishes to say, as do some, "so far as human frailty permits,"[1] let everyone frankly interpret these words negatively, to mean "I do not promise chastity."[2] For human frailty does not permit a chaste life,[3] but only angelic power and celestial might.[4] Thus he should keep his conscience free from all vows. 2 Pet. 2:11

On the question whether those who are not yet married should marry or remain unmarried, I do not care to give advice either way. I leave that to common Christian order and to everyone's better judgment. But as regards the wretched multitude who now sit in shame and heaviness of conscience because their wives are called "priests' harlots" and their children "priests' children" I will not withhold my faithful counsel nor deprive them of the comfort which is their due. I say this boldly by my jester's right.[5]

You will find many a pious priest against whom no one has anything to say except that he is weak and has come to shame with a woman, though both parties may be minded with all their heart to live always together in wedded love and troth, if only they could do it with a clear conscience, even though they might have to bear public shame. Two such persons are certainly married before God. And I say that where they are thus minded, and so come to live to-

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[1] Quantum fragilitas humana permittit. A qualification of the vow.

[2] i. e., Celibacy. Non promitto castitatem.

[3] Fragilitas humana non permittit caste vivere.

[4] Angelica fortitudo et coelestis virtus.

[5] The court-jester was allowed unusual freedom of speech. See Prefatory Letter above, p. 62.

gether, they should boldly save their consciences; let him take and keep her as his wedded wife, and live honestly with her as her husband, caring nothing whether the pope will have it so or not, whether it be against canon law or human law. The salvation of your soul is of more importance than tyrannical, arbitrary, wicked laws, which are not necessary for salvation and are not commanded by God. You should do like the children of Israel, who stole from the Egyptians the hire they had earned, or like a servant who steals from his wicked master the wages he has earned. In like manner steal thou from the pope thy wife and child! Let the man who has faith enough to venture this, boldly follow me; I shall not lead him astray. Though I have not the authority of a pope, I have the authority of a Christian to advise and help my neighbor against sins and temptations; and that not without cause and reason.

Ex. 12:35 f.

First, Not every priest can do without a woman, not only on account of the weakness of the flesh, but much more because of the necessities of the household. If he, then, may have a woman, and the pope grants him that, and yet may not have her in marriage,—what is that but leaving a man and a woman alone and forbidding them to fall? It is as though one were to put fire and straw together and command that it shall neither smoke nor burn.

Second, The pope has as little power to command this, as he has to forbid eating, drinking, the natural movement of the bowels or growing fat. No one, therefore, is bound to keep it, but the pope is responsible for all the sins which are committed against this ordinance, for all the souls which are lost thereby, for all the consciences which are thereby confused and tortured; and therefore he has long deserved that some one should drive him out of the world, so many wretched souls has he strangled with this devil's snare; though I hope that there are many to whom God has been more gracious at their last hour than the pope has been in their life. Nothing good has ever come out of the papacy and its laws, nor ever will.

Third, Although the law of the pope is against it, nevertheless, when the estate of matrimony has been entered against the pope's law, then his law is at an end, and is no longer valid; for the commandment of God, which decrees that no one shall put man and wife asunder, takes precedence of the law of the pope; and the commandments of God must not be broken and neglected for the sake of the pope's commandment, though many mad jurists, in the papal interest, have devised "impediments" [1] and have prevented, destroyed and confused the estate of matrimony, until by their means God's commandment has been altogether destroyed. To make a long story short, there are not in the whole "spiritual" law of the pope two lines which could be instructive to a pious Christian, and there are, alas! so many mistaken and dangerous laws that the best thing would be to make a bonfire of it.[2]

Matt. 19:6

But if you say that this[3] would give offence, and the pope must first grant dispensation, I reply that whatever offence is in it, is the fault of the Roman See, which has established such laws without right and against God; before God and the Scriptures it is no offence. Moreover, if the pope can grant dispensations from his avaricious and tyrannical laws for money's sake, then every Christian can grant dispensations from them—for the sake of God and the salvation of souls. For Christ has set us free from all human laws, especially when they are opposed to God and the salvation of souls, as St. Paul teaches in Galatians v and I Corinthians xi.

Gal. 5:1
1 Cor. 9:4 ff.; 10:23

15. Nor must I forget the poor convents! The evil

[1] The laws governing marriage were entirely the laws of the Church. The canon law prohibited marriage of blood-relatives as far as the seventh degree of consanguinity. In 1204 the prohibition was restricted to the first four degrees; lawful marriage within these degrees was possible only by dispensation, which was not all too difficult to secure, especially by those who were willing to pay for it (see above, p. 96). The relation of god-parents to god-children was also held to establish a "spiritual consanguinity" which might serve as a bar to lawful marriage. See BENRATH, p. 103, note 74, and in the Babylonian Captivity, below, p. 265.

[2] This Luther actually did. When he burned the papal bull of excommunication (Dec. 10, 1520) a copy of the canon law was also given to the flames.

[3] i. e., The marriage of the clergy.

Abolition of Reserved Cases in the Monasteries

spirit, who by human laws now confuses all estates in life, and has made them unbearable, has taken possession of certain abbots, abbesses and prelates also, and causes them so to govern their brethren and sisters as to send them the more speedily to hell, and make them lead a wretched life even here; for such is the lot of all the devil's martyrs. That is to say, they have reserved to themselves in confession, all, or at least some, of the mortal sins which are secret, so that no brother, on his obedience and on pain of the ban, can absolve another from these sins.[1] Now we do not always find angels everywhere, but we find also flesh and blood, which suffers all bannings and threatenings rather than confess secret sins to the prelates and the appointed confessors. Thus they go to the sacrament with such consciences that they become "irregular"[2] and all sorts of other terrible things. O blind shepherds! O mad prelates! O ravening wolves!

To this I say: If a sin is public or notorious, then it is proper that the prelate alone should punish it, and of these sins only and no others he may make exceptions, and reserve them to himself; over secret sins he has no authority, even though they were the worst sins that are or ever can be found, and if the prelate makes exceptions of these sins, he is a tyrant, for he has no such right and is interfering in the judgment of God.

And so I advise these children, brethren and sisters: If your superiors are unwilling to grant you permission to confess your secret sins to whomever you wish, then take them to whatever brother or sister you will and confess them, receive absolution, and then go and do whatever you wish and ought to do; only believe firmly that you are absolved, and nothing more is needed. And do not allow yourself to be troubled by ban, "irregularity," or any of the

[1] On this sort of reserved cases see Discussion of Confession, Vol. I, pp. 96 ff.

[2] "Irregularity" is the condition of any member of a monastic order who has violated the prescriptions of the order and been deprived, in consequence, of the benefits enjoyed by those who live under the regula, viz., the rule of the order.

other things they threaten; these things are valid only in the case of public or notorious sins which one is unwilling to confess; they do not affect you at all. Why do you try by your threatenings, O blind prelate, to prevent secret sins? Let go what you cannot publicly prove, so that God's judgment and grace may also have its work in your subjects! He did not give them so entirely into your hands as to let them go entirely out of His own! Nay, what you have under your rule is but the smaller part. Let your statutes be statutes, but do not exalt them to heaven, to the judgment-seat of God.

Abolition of Mortuary Masses

16. It were also necessary to abolish all anniversary, mortuary and "soul" masses,[1] or at least to diminish their number, since we plainly see that they have become nothing but a mockery, by which God is deeply angered, and that their only purpose is money-getting, gorging and drunkenness. What kind of pleasure should God have in such a miserable gabbling of wretched vigils and masses, which is neither reading nor praying, and even when prayed,[2] they are performed not for God's sake and out of willing love, but for money's sake and because they are a bounden duty. Now it is not possible that any work not done out of willing love can please God or obtain anything from Him. And so it is altogether Christian to abolish, or at least diminish, everything which we see growing into an abuse, and which angers rather than reconciles God. It would please me more—nay, it would be more acceptable to God and far better—that a foundation, church or monastery should put all its anniversary masses and vigils together, and on one day, with hearty sincerity, devotion and faith, hold a true vigil and mass for all its benefactors, rather than hold them by the thousand every year, for each benefactor a special mass, without this devotion and faith. O dear

[1] The three kinds of masses are really but one thing, viz., masses for the dead, celebrated on certain fixed days in each year, in consideration of the enjoyment of certain incomes, received either out of bequeathed endowments or from the heirs of the supposed beneficiaries.

[2] i. e., Even when the mass is decently said.

Christians! God cares not for much praying, but for true praying! Nay, He condemns the many and long prayers, and says in Matthew vi, they will only earn more punishment thereby. But avarice, which cannot trust God, brings such things to pass, fearing that otherwise it must die of hunger!

Matt. 6:7; 23:14

Abolition of the Interdict

17. Certain of the penalties or punishments of the canon law should also be abolished, especially the interdict,[1] which is, beyond all doubt, an invention of the evil Spirit. Is it not a devil's work to try to atone for one sin with many greater sins? And yet, to put God's Word and worship to silence, or to do away with them, is a greater sin than strangling twenty popes at once, and far greater than killing a priest or keeping back some Church property. This is another of the tender virtues taught in the "spiritual law." For one of the reasons why this law is called "spiritual" is because it comes from the Spirit; not, however, from the Holy Spirit, but from the evil spirit.

The ban[2] is to be used in no case except where the Scriptures prescribe its use, i. e., against those who do not hold the true faith, or who live in open sin; it is not to be used for the sake of temporal possessions. But now it is the other way around. Everyone believes and lives as he pleases, most of all those who use the ban to plunder and defame other people, and all the bans are now laid only on account of temporal possessions, for which we have no one to thank but the holy "spiritual lawlessness."[3] Of this I have previously said more in the Discourse.[4]

The other punishments and penalties,—suspension, irregularity, aggravation, reaggravation, deposition, lightnings, thunderings, cursings, damnings and the rest of these devices,—should be buried ten fathoms deep in the earth, so that there should be neither name nor memory of them left on earth. The evil spirit, who has been let loose by the

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[1] See above, p. 72, note 1.
[2] See above, p. 104.
[3] Das geistliche Unrecht.
[4] The Treatise concerning the Ban, above, pp. 33 ff.

"spiritual law" has brought this terrible plague and misery into the heavenly kingdom of the holy Church, and has accomplished by it nothing else than the destruction and hindrance of souls, so that the word of Christ may well be applied to them[1]: "Woe unto you scribes! Ye have taken upon you the authority to teach, and ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye go not in yourselves, and ye suffer not them that are entering." Matt. 23:13

18. All festivals[2] should be abolished, and Sunday alone retained. If it were desired, however, to retain the festivals of Our Lady and of the greater saints, they should be transferred to Sunday, or observed only by a morning mass, after which all the rest of the day should be a working-day. The reason is this: The feast-days are now abused by drinking, gaming, idleness and all manner of sins, so that on the holy days we anger God more than on other days, and have altogether turned things around; the holy days are not holy and the working days are holy, and not only is no service done to God and His saints by the many holy days, but rather great dishonor. There are, indeed, some mad prelates who think they are doing a good work if they make a festival in honor of St. Ottilia or St. Barbara or some other saint, according to the promptings of their blind devotion; but they would be doing a far better work if they honored the saint by turning a saint's-day into a working day. **Abolition of Saints'-Days**

Over and above the spiritual injury, the common man receives two material injuries from this practice, i. e., he neglects his work and he spends more than at other times; nay, he also weakens his body and unfits it for work. We see this every day, yet no one thinks to make it better. We ought not to consider whether or not the pope has instituted the feasts, and whether we must have dispensation and permission to omit them. If a thing is opposed to God, and harmful to man in body and soul, any community,[3] council[4]

[1] i. e., To those who teach and enforce the canon law.

[2] Luther means the saint's-days and minor religious holidays. See also the Discourse on Good Works, Vol. I, pp. 240 f.

[3] Or "congregation."

[4] i. e., City-council.

or government has not only the right to abolish it and put a stop to it, without the will or knowledge of pope or bishop, but they are bound on their souls' salvation to prevent it, even against the will of pope and bishop, though these ought to be themselves the first to forbid it.

Above all, we ought utterly to abolish the consecration days,[1] since they have become nothing else than taverns, fairs and gaming places,[2] and serve only to the increase of God's dishonor and to the damnation of souls. All the pretence about the custom having had a good beginning and being a good work is of no avail. Did not God Himself set aside His own law, which He had given from heaven, when it was perverted and abused? And does He not still daily overturn what He has appointed and destroy what He has made, because of such perversion and abuse? As it is written of Him in Psalm xviii, "With the perverted Thou wilt show Thyself perverse."

Ps. 18:27

Extension of Right of Dispensation

19. The grades or degrees within which marriage is forbidden should be changed, as, for instance, the sponsorships and the third and fourth degrees; and if the pope can grant dispensation in these matters for money and for the sake of his shameful traffic,[3] then every parish priest may give the same dispensations gratis and for the salvation of souls. Yea, would to God that all the things which we must buy at Rome to free ourselves from that money-snare, the canon law,—such things as indulgences, letters of indulgence, "butter-letters,"[4] "mass-letters,"[5] and all the rest of the confessionalia[6] and knaveries for sale at Rome, with which the poor folk are deceived and robbed of their money; would to God, I say, that any priest could, without payment, do and omit all these things! For if the pope has

[1] Kirchweihen, i. e., the anniversary celebration of the consecration of a church. These days had become feast days for the parish, and were observed in anything but a spiritual fashion.

[2] i. e., Occasions for drunkenness, gain and gambling.

[3] See above, pp. 96 f.

[4] See above, p. 98, note 2.

[5] Letters entitling their holder to the benefits of the masses founded by the sodalities or confraternities. See BENRATH, p. 103.

[6] See above, p. 98, and Vol. I, p. 22.

the authority to sell his snares for money and his spiritual nets (I should say laws),[1] surely any priest has much more authority to rend his nets and for God's sake to tread them under foot. But if he has not this right, neither has the pope the right to sell them at his shameful fair.[2]

This is the place to say too that the fasts should be matters of liberty, and all sorts of food made free, as the Gospel makes them. For at Rome they themselves laugh at the fasts, making us foreigners eat the oil with which they would not grease their shoes, and afterwards selling us liberty to eat butter and all sorts of other things; yet the holy Apostle says that in all these things we already have liberty through the Gospel. But they have caught us with their canon law and stolen our rights from us, so that we may have to buy them back with money. Thus they have made our consciences so timid and shy that it is no longer easy to preach about this liberty because the common people take such great offence, thinking it a greater sin to eat butter than to lie, to swear, or even to live unchastely. Nevertheless, what men have decreed, that is the work of man; put it where you will,[3] nothing good ever comes out of it.

Matt. 15:11

1 Cor. 10:25 ff.

20. The forest chapels and rustic churches[4] must be utterly destroyed,—those, namely, to which the recent pilgrimages have been directed,—Wilsnack,[5] Sternberg,[6]

Prohibition of Pilgrimages

[1] The pun is untranslatable,—Netz, Gesetz solt ich sagen.

[2] What the pope sold was release from the "snares" and "nets," viz., dispensation.

[3] i. e., Even into the law of the church.

[4] Die wilden Kapellen und Feldkirchen, i. e., churches which are built in the country, where there are no congregations.

[5] A little town in East Prussia, where was displayed a sacramental wafer, said to have been miraculously preserved from a fire which destroyed the church in 1383. It was alleged that at certain times this wafer exuded drops of blood, reverenced as the blood of Christ, and many miracles were said to have been performed by it. Wilsnack early became a favorite resort for pilgrims. In 1412 the archbishop of Prague, at the instigation of John Hus, forbade the Bohemians to go there. Despite the protests of the Universities of Leipzig and Erfurt, Pope Eugenius IV in 1446 granted special indulgences for this pilgrimage, and the popularity of the shrine was undiminished until the time of the Reformation. Cf. Realencyk, xxi, pp. 347 ff.

[6] In Mecklenburg, where another relic of "the Holy Blood" was displayed after 1491. Cf. Benrath, pp. 104 f.

Trier,[1] the Grimmenthal,[2] and now Regensburg[3] and a goodly number of others. Oh, what a terrible and heavy account will the bishops have to render, who permit this devilish deceit and receive its profits![4] They should be the first to forbid it, and yet they think it a divine and holy thing, and do not see that it is the devil's doing, to strengthen avarice, to create a false, feigned faith, to weaken the parish churches, to multiply taverns and harlotry, to waste money and labor, and to lead the poor folk by the nose. If they had only read the Scriptures to as good purpose as they have read their damnable canon law, they would know well how to deal with this matter.

That miracles are done at these places does not help things, for the evil spirit can do miracles, as Christ has told
Matt. 24:24 us in Matthew xxiv. If they took the matter seriously and forbade this sort of thing, the miracles would quickly come
Acts 5:39 to an end; on the other hand, if the thing were of God their prohibition would not hinder it. And if there were no other evidence that it is not of God, this would be enough,—that people run to these places in excited crowds, as though they had lost their reason, like herds of cattle; for this cannot possibly be of God. Moreover, God has commanded nothing of all this; there is neither obedience nor merit in it; the bishops, therefore, should boldly step in and keep the folk

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[1] The "Holy Coat of Trier" was believed by the credulous to be the seamless coat of Christ, which the soldiers did not rend. It was first exhibited in 1512, but was said to have been presented to the cathedral church of Trier by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great.

[2] Pilgrimage to the Grimmenthal in Meiningen began in 1499. An image of the Virgin, declared to have been miraculously created, was displayed there, and was alleged to work wonderful cures, especially of syphilis.

[3] The "Fair Virgin (die schöne Maria) of Regensburg" was an image of the Virgin similar to that exhibited in the Grimmenthal. The shrine was opened March 25, 1519, and within a month 50,000 pilgrims are said to have worshiped there. (Weimar Ed., VI, 447, note 1). For another explanation see BENRATH, p. 105.

[4] The pilgrimages were a source of large revenue, derived from the sale of medals which were worn as amulets, the fees for masses at the shrines, and the free-will offerings of the pilgrims. A large part of this revenue accrued to the bishop of the diocese, though the popes never overlooked the profits which the sale of indulgences for worship at these shrines could produce. In the Gravamina of 1521 complaint is made that the bishops demand at least 25 to 33 per cent. of the offerings made at shrines of pilgrimage (WREDE, op. cit., II, 687).

away. For what is not commanded—and is concerned for self rather than for the commands of God—that is surely the devil himself. Then, too, the parish churches receive injury, because they are held in smaller honor. In short, these things are signs of great unbelief among the people; if they truly believed, they would have all that they need in their own churches, for to them they are commanded to go.

But what shall I say? Every one[1] plans only how he may establish and maintain such a place of pilgrimage in his diocese and is not at all concerned to have the people believe and live aright; the rulers are like the people; one blind man leads another. Nay, where pilgrimages are not successful, they begin to canonise saints,[2] not in honor of the saints—for they are sufficiently honored without canonisation—but in order to draw crowds and bring in money. Pope and bishop help along; it rains indulgences; there is always money enough for that. But for what God has commanded no one provides; no one runs after these things; there is no money for them. Alas, that we should be so blind! We not only give the devil his own way in his tricks, but we even strengthen him in his wantonness and increase his pranks. I would that the dear saints were left in peace, and the poor folk not led astray! What spirit has given the pope the authority to canonise the saints? Who tells him whether they are saints or not? Are there not already sins enough on earth, that we too must tempt God, interfere in His judgment and set up the dear saints as lures for money?

Matt. 13:14

Canonisations to be Prohibited

Therefore I advise that the saints be left to canonise themselves. Yea, it is God alone who should canonise them. And let every man stay in his own parish, where he finds more than in all the shrines of pilgrimage, even though all the shrines were one. Here we find baptism, the sacrament,

[1] i. e., Every bishop.

[2] The possession of a saint gave a church a certain reputation and distinction, which was sufficiently coveted to make local Church authorities willing to pay roundly for the canonisation of a departed bishop or other local dignitary. Cf. Hutten's Vadiscus (Böcking, IV, 232).

preaching and our neighbor, and these are greater things than all the saints in heaven, for it is by God's Word and sacrament that they have all been made saints. So long as we despise such great things God is just in the wrathful judgment by which He appoints the devil to lead us hither and thither, to establish pilgrimages, to found churches and chapels, to secure the canonisation of saints, and to do other such fool's-works, by which we depart from true faith into new, false misbelief. This is what he did in olden times to the people of Israel, when he led them away from the temple at Jerusalem to countless other places, though he did it in the name of God and under the plausible guise of holiness, though all the prophets preached against it and were persecuted for so doing. But now no one preaches against it, perhaps for fear that pope, priests and monks would persecute him also. In this way St. Antoninus of Florence[1] and certain others must now be made saints and canonised, that their holiness, which would otherwise have served only for the glory of God and as a good example, may serve to bring in fame and money.

Although the canonising of saints may have been good in olden times, it is not good now; just as many other things were good in olden times and are now scandalous and injurious, such as feast-days, church-treasures and church-adornment. For it is evident that through the canonising of saints neither God's glory nor the improvement of Christians is sought, but only money and glory, in that one church wants to be something more and have something more than others, and would be sorry if another had the same thing and its advantage were common property. So entirely, in these last, evil days, have spiritual goods been misused and applied to the gaining of temporal goods, that everything, even God Himself, has been forced into the service of avarice. And even these special advantages lead

[1] Archbishop of Florence (died 1459). He was canonised, May 31, 1523, by Pope Hadrian VI. When Luther wrote this the process of canonisation had already begun.

only to dissensions, divisions and pride, in that the churches, differing from one another, hold each other in contempt, and exalt themselves one above another, though all the gifts which God bestows are the common and equal property of all churches and should only serve the cause of unity. The pope, too, is glad for the present state of affairs; he would be sorry if all Christians were equal and were at one.

Prohibition of Special Privileges

This is the place to speak of the church licenses, bulls and other things which the pope sells at his flaying-place in Rome. We should either abolish them or disregard them, or at least make them the common property of all churches. For if he sells or gives away licenses and privileges, indulgences, graces, advantages, faculties[1] to Wittenberg, to Halle, to Venice and, above, all to his own Rome, why does he not give these things to all churches alike? Is he not bound to do for all Christians, gratis and for God's sake, everything that he can, and even to shed his blood for them? Tell me, then, why he gives or sells to one church and not to another? Or must the accursed money make, in the eyes of His Holiness, so great a difference among Christians, who all have the same baptism, Word, faith, Christ, God and all things? Are we to be blind while we have eyes to see, fools while we have our reason, that they expect us to worship such greed, knavery and humbug? He is a shepherd,—yes, so long as you have money, and no longer! And yet they are not ashamed of their knavery, leading us hither and yon with their bulls! Their one concern is the accursed money, and nothing else!

Eph. 4:4f.

My advice is this: If such fool's-work cannot be abolished, then every pious Christian man should open his eyes, and not be misled by the hypocritical Roman bulls and seals, stay at home in his own church and be content with his baptism, his Gospel, his faith, his Christ and with God, Who is everywhere the same; and let the pope remain a blind leader of the blind. Neither angel nor pope can give you as much as God gives you in your parish-church. Nay,

Matt. 15:4

[1] Indulta, i. e., grants of special privilege.

the pope leads you away from the gifts of God, which you have without pay, to his gifts, which you must buy; and he gives you lead[1] for gold, hide for meat, the string for the purse, wax for honey, words for goods, the letter for the spirit. You see this before your very eyes, but you are unwilling to notice it. If you are to ride to heaven on his wax and parchment, your chariot will soon go to pieces, and you will fall into hell, not in God's name!

Let this be your fixed rule: What you must buy from the pope is neither good nor of God; for what is from God, to wit, the Gospel and the works of God, is not only given without money, but the whole world is punished and damned because it has not been willing to receive it as a free gift. We have deserved of God that we should be so deceived, because we have despised His holy Word and the grace of baptism, as St. Paul says: "God shall send a strong delusion upon all those who have not received the truth to their salvation, to the end that they may believe and follow after lies and knavery," which serves them right.

2 Thess. 2:11 f.

Mendicancy to be Prohibited, and the Poor to be Cared for

21. One of our greatest necessities is the abolition of all begging throughout Christendom. Among Christians no one ought to go begging! It would also be easy to make a law, if only we had the courage and the serious intention, to the effect that every city should provide for its own poor, and admit no foreign beggars by whatever name they might be called, whether pilgrims or mendicant monks. Every city could support its own poor, and if it were too small, the people in the surrounding villages also should be exhorted to contribute, since in any case they have to feed so many vagabonds and knaves in the guise of mendicants. In this way, too, it could be known who were really poor and who not.

There would have to be an overseer or warden who knew all the poor and informed the city council or the priests what

[1] "Lead," the leaden seal attached to the bull; "hide", the parchment on which it is written; "the string," the ribbon or silken cord from which the seals depend; "wax," the seal holding the cord to the parchment.

they needed; or some other better arrangement might be made. In my judgment there is no other business in which so much knavery and deceit are practised as in begging, and yet it could all be easily abolished. Moreover, this free and universal begging hurts the common people. I have considered that each of the five or six mendicant orders[1] visits the same place more than six or seven times every year; besides these there are the common beggars, the "stationaries" [2] and the palmers,[3] so that it has been reckoned that every town is laid under tribute about sixty times a year, not counting what is given to the government in taxes, imposts and assessments, what is stolen by the Roman See with its wares, and what is uselessly consumed. Thus it seems to me one of God's greatest miracles that we can continue to support ourselves.

To be sure, some think that in this way[4] the poor would not be so well provided for and that not so many great stone houses and monasteries would be built. This I can well believe. Nor is it necessary. He who wishes to be poor should not be rich; and if he wishes to be rich, let him put his hand to the plow and seek his riches in the earth! It is enough if the poor are decently cared for, so that they do not die of hunger or of cold. It is not fitting that one man should live in idleness on another's labor, or be rich and live comfortably at the cost of another's discomfort, according to the present perverted custom; for St. Paul says, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." God has not decreed

2 Thess. 3:10

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[1] Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites and Servites.

[2] Botschaften, interpreted by Benrath (p. 105), Clemen (I, 406, note) and Weimar Ed. (VI, 406, note 1) as a reference to the stationarii. They were wandering beggars who, for an alms, would enroll the contributor in the list of beneficiaries of their patron saint, an alleged insurance against disease, accident, etc. They were classified according to the names of their patron saints, St. Anthony, St. Hubert, St. Valentine, etc. Protests against their operations were raised at the Diets of Worms (1521) and Nürnberg (1523). Included in these protests are the terminarii, i. e., the collectors of alms sent out by the mendicant orders. See Wrede, op. cit., II, 678, 688, III, 651, and Benrath, loc. cit.

[3] Wallbrüder, the professional pilgrims who spent their lives in wandering from one place of pilgrimage to another and subsisted on the alms of the faithful.

[4] i. e., If the plan above proposed were adopted.

that any man shall live from another's goods save only the priests, who rule and preach, and these because of their spiritual labor, as Paul says in I Corinthians ix, and Christ also says to the Apostles, "Every laborer is worthy of his hire."

1 Cor. 9:14
Luke 10:7

22. It is also to be feared that the many masses[1] which are endowed in the foundations and monasteries are not only of little use, but greatly arouse the wrath of God. It would therefore be profitable not to endow any more, but rather to abolish many that are already endowed, since we see that they are regarded only as sacrifices and good works,[2] though they are really sacraments, just like baptism and penance,[3] which profit only those who receive them, and no others. But now the custom has crept in, that masses are said for the living and the dead, and all hopes are built upon them; for this reason so many of them have been founded and the present state of affairs has come about.

Prohibition of Endowed Masses

My proposal is perhaps too novel and daring, especially for those who fear that through the discontinuance of these masses their trade and livelihood may be destroyed, and so I must refrain from saying more about it until we have come back to a correct understanding of what the mass is and what it is good for. These many years, alas, it has been made a trade practised for a temporal livelihood, so that I would henceforth advise a man to become a shepherd or to seek some other trade rather than become a priest or a monk, unless he first knows well what it is to celebrate mass.

I am not speaking, however, of the old foundations and cathedrals, which were doubtless established in order that the children of the nobility (since, according to the customs of the German nation not all of them can become heirs or rulers), might be provided for in these foundations, and there be free to serve God, to study, to become scholars and to make scholars. But I am speaking of the new founda-

[1] See above, p. 129, note 1.

[2] See Treatise on the New Testament, Vol. I, pp. 308 ff.

[3] In the Babylonian Captivity (below, pp. 291 f.) Luther definitely excludes penance from the number of sacraments, but see also p. 177.

tions, which have been established only for the saying of prayers and masses; for after their example, even the old foundations have been burdened with like prayers and masses, so that they are of little or no profit; though it is also of God's grace that they too come at last, as they deserve, to the dregs, i. e., to the wailing of organs and of choral singers, and to dead, cold masses, by which the incomes of the worldly endowments are gotten and spent. Such things pope, bishops and doctors should examine and proscribe; but now it is they who are most given to them. They let everything pass, if only it brings in money; one blind man is always leading another. This is the work of avarice and of the spiritual law.

Again, no one person should be allowed any longer to hold more than one canonry or prebend. He must be content with a modest position, that some one else may also have something. This would do away with the excuses of those who say that they must hold more than one such office to "maintain a proper station." A "proper station" might be so broadly interpreted that a whole land would not be enough to maintain it! Moreover avarice and veiled distrust of God assuredly go with it, so that what is alleged to be the need of "a proper station" is often nothing else than avarice and distrust.

Sodalities and Indulgences

23. Sodalities,[1] indulgences, letters of indulgence, "butter-letters," [2] mass-letters,[3] dispensations, and everything

[1] The sodalities ("fraternities," "confraternities"), still an important institution in the Roman Church, flourished especially in the XVI Century. They are associations for devotional purposes. The members of the sodalities are obligated to the recitation of certain prayers and the attendance upon certain masses at stipulated times. By virtue of membership in the association each member is believed to participate in the benefits accruing from these "good works" of all the members. In the case of most of the sodalities membership entitled the member to the enjoyment of certain indulgences. In 1520 Wittenberg boasted of 20 such fraternities, Cologne of 80, Hamburg of more than 100 (Realencyk., III, 437). In 1519 Degenhard Peffinger, of Wittenberg, was a member of 8 such fraternities in his home city, and of 27 in other places. For Luther's view of the sodalities see above, pp. 8, 26 ff. On the whole subject see BENRATH, pp. 106 f.; KOLDE in Realencyk., III, pp. 434 ff.; LEA, Hist. of Conf. and Indulg, III, pp. 470 ff.

[2] See above, p. 98, note 2.

[3] See above, p. 128, note 5.

else of the sort, are to be drowned and destroyed. There is nothing good in them. If the pope has the power to grant you dispensation to eat butter and to absent yourself from mass, then he ought also be able to leave this power to the priests, from whom, indeed, he has no right to take it. I speak especially of those fraternities in which indulgences, masses and good works are portioned out. Dear friend, in your baptism you entered into a fraternity with Christ, all the angels, saints and Christians on earth. Hold to this fraternity and live up to its demands, and you have fraternities enough. The others—let them glitter as they will—are but as counters compared with g u l d e n s. But if there were a fraternity which contributed money to feed the poor or to help somebody in some other way, such a one would be good, and would have its indulgence and its merit in heaven. Now, however, they have become excuses for gluttony and drunkenness.[1]

Above all, we should drive out of German lands the papal legates with their "faculties," [2] which they sell us for large sums of money, though that is sheer knavery. For example, in return for money they legalize unjust gains, dissolve oaths, vows and agreements, break and teach men to break the faith and fealty which they have pledged to one another; and they say the pope has the authority to do this. It is the evil Spirit who bids them say this. Thus they sell us a doctrine of devils, and take money for teaching us sin and leading us to hell.

If there were no other evil wiles to prove the pope the true Antichrist, yet this one thing were enough to prove it.

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[1] The excesses committed at the feasts of the religious societies were often a public scandal. See Lea, H i s t . of C o n f . and I n d u l g , III, pp. 437 ff.

[2] "Faculties" were extraordinary powers, usually for the granting of indulgences and of absolution in "reserved cases" (see above, p. 105, note 3). They were bestowed by the pope and could be revoked by him at any time. Sometimes they were given to local Church officials, but were usually held by the legates or commissaries sent from Rome. Complaints were made at the Diets of Worms (1520) and Nürnberg (1523) that the papal commissaries and legates interfered with the ordinary methods of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and appointment. See Wrede, o p . c i t . , II, 673, III, 653.

Hearest thou this, O pope, not most holy, but most sinful? O that God from heaven would soon destroy thy throne and sink it in the abyss of hell! Who hath given thee authority to exalt thyself above thy God, to break and to loose His commandments, and to teach Christians, especially the German nation, praised in all history for its nobility, its constancy and fidelity, to be inconstant, perjurers, traitors, profligates, faithless? God hath commanded to keep oath and faith even with an enemy, and thou undertakest to loose this His commandment, and ordainest in thine heretical, antichristian decretals that thou hast His power. Thus through thy throat and through thy pen the wicked Satan doth lie as he hath never lied before. Thou dost force and wrest the Scriptures to thy fancy. O Christ, my Lord, look down, let the day of thy judgment break, and destroy the devil's nest at Rome! Here sitteth the man of whom St. Paul hath said that he shall exalt himself above Thee, sit in Thy Church and set himself up as God,—the man of sin and the son of perdition! What else is the papal power than only the teaching and increasing of sin and evil, the leading of souls to damnation under Thy name and guise? 2 Thess. 2:3 f.

In olden times the children of Israel had to keep the oath which they had unwittingly been deceived into giving to their enemies, the Gibeonites, and King Zedekiah was miserably lost, with all his people, because he broke this oath to the King of Babylon. Even among us, a hundred years ago, that fine king of Hungary and Poland, Wladislav,[1] was slain by the Turk, with so many noble people, because he allowed himself to be deceived by the papal legate and cardinal, and broke the good and advantageous treaty which he had sworn with the Turk. The pious Emperor Sigis- Josh. 9:19 ff. 2 Kings 24:20; 25:4 ff.

[1] Wladislav I forced the Sultan to sue for peace in 1443. At the instigation of the papal legate, Cardinal Caesarini, who represented that the treaty had not been approved by the pope, and absolved the king from the fulfilment of its conditions, he renewed the war in 1444. At the battle of Varna, Nov. 10th, 1444. the Hungarians were decisively defeated, and Wladislav and Caesarini both killed. See CREIGHTON, Hist. of the Papacy, III, 67.

mund had no good fortune after the Council of Constance, when he allowed the knaves to break the safe-conduct which had been given to John Hus and Jerome,[1] and all the trouble between us and the Bohemians was the consequence. Even in our own times, God help us! how much Christian blood has been shed over the oath and alliance which Pope Julius made between the Emperor Maximilian and King Louis of France,[2] and afterwards broke? How could I tell all the troubles which the popes have stirred up by the devilish presumption with which they annul oaths and vows which have been made between great princes, making a jest of these things, and taking money for it. I have hopes that the judgment day is at the door; nothing can possibly be worse than the Roman See. He suppresses God's commandment, he exalts his own commandment over it; if he is not Antichrist, then let some one else tell who he can be! But more of this another time, and better.

The Case of the Bohemians

24. It is high time that we seriously and honestly consider the case of the Bohemians,[3] and come into union with them so that the terrible slander, hatred and envy on both sides may cease. As befits my folly, I shall be the first to submit

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[1] John Hus and Jerome of Prague were convicted of heresy by the Council of Constance and burned at the stake, the former July 6th, 1415, the latter May 30th, 1416. Hus had come to Constance under the safe-conduct of the Emperor Sigismund. Luther is in error when he assumes that Jerome had a similar safe-conduct. In September, 1415, the Council passed a decree which asserted that "neither by natural, divine or human law was any promise to be observed to the prejudice of the catholic faith." On the whole matter of the safe-conduct and its violation see Lea, Hist. of the Inquisition in the M.A., II, pp. 453 ff.

[2] The League of Cambray, negotiated in 1508 for war against Venice. In 1510 Venice made terms with the pope and detached him from the alliance, and the result was war between the pope and the King of France. See Cambridge Modern History, I, pp. 130 ff., and literature there cited.

[3] i. e., The Hussites. After the martyrdom of Hus his followers maintained for a time a strong organisation in Bohemia, and resisted with arms all attempts to force them into conformity with the Roman Church. The Council of Basel succeeded (1434) in reconciling the more moderate party among the Bohemians (the Calixtines) by allowing the administration of the cup to the laity. The more extreme party, however, refused to subscribe the Compactata of Basel. Though they soon ceased to be a factor in the political situation, they remained outside the Church and perpetuated the teachings of Hus in sectarian organisations. The most important of these, the so-called Bohemian Brethren, had extended into Poland and Prussia before Luther's time. See Realencyk., III, 465–467.

an opinion on this subject, with due deference to every one who may understand the case better than I.

First, We must honestly confess the truth, stop justifying ourselves, and grant the Bohemians that John Hus and Jerome of Prague were burned at Constance in violation of the papal, Christian, imperial safe-conduct and oath; whereby God's commandment was sinned against and the Bohemians were given ample cause for bitterness; and although they ought to have been perfect and to have patiently endured this great injustice and disobedience of God on our part, nevertheless they were not bound to approve of it and to acknowledge that it was well done. Nay, even to-day they should give up life and limb rather than confess that it is right to violate an imperial, papal, Christian safe-conduct, and faithlessly to act contrary to it. So then, although it is the impatience of the Bohemians which is at fault, yet the pope and his followers are still more to blame for all the trouble, error and loss of souls that have followed upon that council.

I have no desire to pass judgment at this time upon John Hus's articles or to defend his errors, though I have not yet found any errors in his writings, and I am quite prepared to believe that it was neither fair judgment nor honest condemnation which was passed by those who, in their faithless dealing, violated a Christian safe-conduct and a commandment of God. Beyond doubt they were possessed rather by the evil spirit than by the Holy Spirit. No one will doubt that the Holy Spirit does not act contrary to the commandment of God; and no one is so ignorant as not to know that the violation of faith and of a safe-conduct is contrary to the commandment of God, even though they had been promised to the devil himself, still more when the promise was made to a mere heretic. It is also quite evident that such a promise was made to John Hus and the Bohemians and was not kept, but that he was burned in spite of it. I do not wish, however, to make John Hus a saint or a martyr, as do some of the Bohemians, though I confess that

injustice was done him, and that his books and doctrines were unjustly condemned; for the judgments of God are secret and terrible, and no one save God alone should undertake to reveal or utter them.

All I wish to say is this: though he were never so wicked a heretic, nevertheless he was burned unjustly and against God's commandment, and the Bohemians should not be forced to approve of such conduct, or else we shall never come into unity. Not obstinacy but the open admission of truth must make us one. It is useless to pretend, as was done at that time, that a safe-conduct given to a heretic need not be kept.[1] That is as much as to say that God's commandments are not to be kept to the end that God's commandments may be kept. The devil made them mad and foolish, so that they did not know what they were saying or doing. God has commanded that a safe-conduct shall be kept. This commandment we should keep though the world fall. How much more, when it is only a question of freeing a heretic! We should vanquish heretics with books, not with burning; for so the ancient fathers did. If it were a science to vanquish the heretics with fire, then the hangmen would be the most learned doctors on earth; we should no longer need to study, but he who overcame another by force might burn him at the stake.

S e c o n d , The emperor and the princes should send to the Bohemians some pious and sensible bishops and scholars; but by no means a cardinal or papal legate or inquisitor, for those people are utter ignoramuses as regards things Christian; they seek not the welfare of souls, but, like all the pope's hypocrites, only their own power, profit and glory; indeed, they were the prime movers in this miserable business at Constance. The men thus sent into Bohemia should inform themselves about the faith of the Bohemians, and whether it be possible to unite all their sects. Then the pope should, for their souls' sake, lay aside his supremacy for the time being, and, according to the decree of the most

[1] See above, p. 140, note 1.

Christian Council of Nicaea,[1] allow the Bohemians to choose one of their number to be Archbishop of Prague,[2] and he should be confirmed by the bishop of Olmütz in Moravia, or the bishop of Gran in Hungary, or the bishop of Gnesen in Poland, or the bishop of Magdeburg in Germany.[3] It will be enough if he is confirmed by one or two of these, as was the custom in the time of St. Cyprian.[4] The pope has no right to oppose such an arrangement, and if he does oppose it, he becomes a wolf and a tyrant; no one should follow him and his ban should be met with a counter-ban.

If, however, it were desired, in honor of the See of St. Peter, to do this with the pope's consent, I should be satisfied, provided it does not cost the Bohemians a h e l l e r and the pope does not bind them at all nor make them subject to his tyrannies by oaths and obligations, as he does all other bishops, in despite of God and of justice. If he will not be satisfied with the honor of having his consent asked, then let them not bother any more about him[5] and his rights, laws and tyrannies; let the election suffice, and let the blood of all the souls which are endangered cry out against him, for no one should consent to injustice; it is enough to have offered tyranny an honor. If it cannot be otherwise, then an election and approval by the common people can even now be quite as valid as a confirmation by a tyrant; but I hope this will not be necessary. Some of the Romans or the good bishops and scholars will sometime mark and oppose papal tyranny.

I would also advise against compelling them to abolish both kinds in the sacrament,[6] since that is neither unchris-

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[1] See KOHLER, L. und die Kirchengesch., 139, 151.

[2] The Archbishop of Prague was primate of the Church in Bohemia.

[3] The dioceses of these bishops were contiguous to that of the Archbishop of Prague.

[4] Bishop of Carthage, 249–258 A. D.

[5] L a s s m a n i h n e i n g u t j a r h a b e n, literally, "Bid him good-day."

[6] One of the chief points of controversy between the Roman Church and the Hussites. The Roman Church administered to the laity only the bread, the Hussites used both elements. See below, pp. 178 f.

tian nor heretical, but they should be allowed to retain their own practice, if they wish. Yet the new bishop should be careful that no discord arise because of such a practice, but should kindly instruct them that neither practice is wrong;[1] just as it ought not to cause dissension that the clergy differ from the laity in manner of life and in dress. In like manner if they were unwilling to receive the Roman canon law, they should not be forced to do so, but we should first make sure that they live in accordance with faith and with the Scriptures. For Christian faith and life can well exist without the intolerable laws of the pope, nay, they cannot well exist unless there be fewer of these Roman laws, or none at all. In baptism we have become free and have been made subject to God's Word only; why should any man ensnare us in his words? As St. Paul says, "Ye have become free, be not servants of men," i. e. of those who rule with man-made laws.

1 Cor. 7:23
Gal. 5:1

If I knew that the Picards[2] held no other error touching the sacrament of the altar except that they believe that the bread and wine are present in their true nature, but that the body and blood of Christ are truly present under them, then I would not condemn them, but would let them enter the obedience of the bishop of Prague. For it is not an article of faith that bread and wine are not essentially and naturally in the sacrament, but this is an opinion of St. Thomas[3] and the pope. On the other hand, it is an article of faith that in the natural bread and wine the true natural body and blood of Christ are present.[4] And so we should tolerate the opinions of both sides until they come to an agreement, because there is no danger in believing that

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[1] Luther had not yet reached the conviction that the administration of the cup to the laity was a necessity, but see the argument in the Babylonian Captivity, below, pp. 178 ff.

[2] The Bohemian Brethren, who are here distinguished from the Hussites, Cf. Realencyk., III, 452, 49.

[3] St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican theologian of the XIII. Century (1225–74), whose influence is still dominant in Roman theology.

[4] The view of the sacramental presence adopted by William of Occam. For Luther's own view at this time, see below, pp. 187 ff.

bread is there or is not there. For we have to endure many practices and ordinances so long as they are not harmful to faith. On the other hand, if they had a different faith,[1] I would rather have them outside the Church; yet I would teach them the truth.

Whatever other errors and schisms might be discovered in Bohemia should be tolerated until the archbishop had been restored and had gradually brought all the people together again in one common doctrine. They will assuredly never be united by force, nor by defiance, nor by haste; it will take time and forbearance. Had not even Christ to tarry with His disciples a long while and bear with their unbelief, until they believed His resurrection? If they but had again a regular bishop and church order, without Roman tyranny, I could hope that things would soon be better.

The restoration of the temporal goods which formerly belonged to the Church should not be too strictly demanded, but since we are Christians and each is bound to help the rest, it is in our power, for the sake of unity, to give them these things and let them keep them in the sight of God and men. For Christ says, "Where two are at one with each other on earth, there am I in the midst of them." Would to God that on both sides we were working toward this unity, offering our hands to one another in brotherly humility, and not standing stubbornly on our powers or rights! Love is greater and more necessary than the papacy at Rome, for there can be papacy without love and love without papacy. Matt. 18:19 f.

With this counsel I shall have done what I could. If the pope or his followers hinder it, they shall render an account for seeking their own things rather than the things of their neighbor, contrary to the love of God. The pope ought to give up his papacy and all his possessions and honors, if he could by that means save one soul; but now he would let the world go to destruction rather than yield a hair's-breadth Phil. 2:4

[1] i. e., If they did not believe in the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

of his presumptuous authority. And yet he would be the "most holy"! Here my responsibility ends.

The Universities

25. The universities also need a good, thorough reformation—I must say it no matter whom it vexes—for everything which the papacy has instituted and ordered is directed only towards the increasing of sin and error. What else are the universities, if their present condition remains unchanged, than as the book of Maccabees says, Gymnasia Epheborum et Graecae gloriae,[1] in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle[2] rules alone, even more than Christ. In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle's Physics, Metaphysics, On the Soul, Ethics, which have hitherto been thought his best books, should be altogether discarded, together with all the rest of his books which boast of treating the things of nature, although nothing can be learned from them either of the things of nature or the things of the Spirit. Moreover no one has so far understood his meaning, and many souls have been burdened with profitless labor and study, at the cost of much precious time. I venture to say that any potter has more knowledge of nature than is written in these books. It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has with his false words deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins.

2 Macc. 4:9, 12

Aristotle

Why, this wretched man, in his best book, On the Soul, teaches that the soul dies with the body, although many have tried with vain words to save his reputation. As though we had not the Holy Scriptures, in which we are abundantly instructed about all things, and of them Aristotle had not the faintest inkling! And yet this dead

[1] Places for training youths in Greek glory.

[2] The philosophy of Aristotle dominated the mediæval universities. It not only provided the forms in which theological and religious truth came to expression, but it was the basis of all scientific study in every department. The man who did not know Aristotle was an ignoramus.

heathen has conquered and obstructed and almost suppressed the books of the living God, so that when I think of this miserable business I can believe nothing else than that the evil spirit has introduced the study of Aristotle.

Again, his book on Ethics is the worst of all books. It flatly opposes divine grace and all Christian virtues, and yet it is considered one of his best works. Away with such books! Keep them away from all Christians! Let no one accuse me of exaggeration, or of condemning what I do not understand! My dear friend, I know well whereof I speak. I know my Aristotle as well as you or the likes of you. I have lectured on him[1] and heard lectures on him, and I understand him better than do St. Thomas or Scotus.[2] This I can say without pride, and if necessary I can prove it. I care not that so many great minds have wearied themselves over him for so many hundred years. Such objections do not disturb me as once they did; for it is plain as day that other errors have remained for even more centuries in the world and in the universities.

I should be glad to see Aristotle's books on Logic, Rhetoric and Poetics retained or used in an abridged form; as text-books for the profitable training of young people in speaking and preaching. But the commentaries and notes should be abolished, and as Cicero's Rhetoric is read without commentaries and notes, so Aristotle's Logic should be read as it is, without such a mass of comments. But now neither speaking nor preaching is learned from it, and it has become nothing but a disputing and a weariness to the flesh.

Besides this there are the languages—Latin, Greek and Hebrew—the mathematical disciplines and history. But all this I give over to the specialists, and, indeed, the reform would come of itself, if we were only seriously bent upon it. In truth, much depends upon it; for it is here[3] that the

[1] Or, "I have read him." Luther's lesen allows of either interpretation.

[2] Duns Scotus, died 1308. In the XV and XVI Centuries he was regarded as the rival of Thomas Aquinas for first place among the theological teachers of the Church.

[3] i. e., In the universities.

Christian youth and the best of our people, with whom the future of Christendom lies, are to be educated and trained. Therefore I consider that there is no work more worthy of pope or emperor than a thorough reformation of the universities, and there is nothing worse or more worthy of the devil than unreformed universities.

The Canon Law

The medical men I leave to reform their own faculties; the jurists and theologians I take as my share, and I say, in the first place, that it were well if the canon law, from the first letter to the last, and especially the decretals, were utterly blotted out. The Bible contains more than enough directions for all our living, and so the study of the canon law only stands in the way of the study of the Holy Scriptures; moreover, it smacks for the most part of mere avarice and pride. Even though there were much in it that is good, it might as well be destroyed, for the pope has taken the whole canon law captive and imprisoned it in the "chamber of his heart,"[1] so that the study of it is henceforth a waste of time and a farce. At present the canon law is not what is in the books, but what is in the sweet will of the pope and his flatterers. Your cause may be thoroughly established in the canon law; still the pope has his scrinium pectoris,[2] and all law and the whole world must be guided by that. Now it is ofttimes a knave, and even the devil himself, who rules this scrinium, and they boast that it is ruled by the Holy Spirit! Thus they deal with Christ's unfortunate people. They give them many laws and themselves keep none of them, but others they compel either to keep them or else to buy release.

Since, then, the pope and his followers have suspended the whole canon law, and since they pay no heed to it, but regard their own wanton will as a law exalting them above all the world, we should follow their example and for our

[1] See above, pp. 94 f.

[2] i. e., "The chamber of his heart." Boniface VIII (1294–1303) had decreed, Romanus pontifex jura omnia in scrinio pectoris sui censetur habere, "the Roman pontiff has all laws in the chamber of his heart." This decree was received into the canon law (c. 1, de const. in VIto (I, 2)).

part also reject these books. Why should we waste our time studying them? We could never discover the whole arbitrary will of the pope, which has now become the canon law. The canon law has arisen in the devil's name, let it fall in the name of God, and let there be no more doctores decretorum[1] in the world, but only doctores scrinii papalis, that is, "hypocrites of the pope"! It is said that there is no better temporal rule anywhere than among the Turks, who have neither spiritual nor temporal law, but only their Koran; and we must confess that there is no more shameful rule than among us, with our spiritual and temporal law, so that there is no estate which lives according to the light of nature, still less according to Holy Scripture.

Secular Law

The temporal law,—God help us! what a wilderness it has become![2] Though it is much better, wiser and more rational than the "spiritual law" which has nothing good about it except the name, still there is far too much of it. Surely the Holy Scriptures and good rulers would be law enough; as St. Paul says in I Corinthians vi, "Is there no one among you can judge his neighbor's cause, that ye must go to law before heathen courts?" It seems just to me that territorial laws and territorial customs should take precedence of the general imperial laws, and the imperial laws be used only in case of necessity. Would to God that as every land has its own peculiar character, so it were ruled by its own brief laws, as the lands were ruled before these imperial laws were invented, and many lands are still ruled

1 Cor. 6:1

[1] Doctores decretorum, "Doctor of Decrees," an academic degree occasionally given to professors of Canon Law; doctor scrinii papalis, "Doctor of the Papal Heart."

[2] The introduction of Roman law into Germany, as the accepted law of the empire, had begun in the XII Century. With the decay of the feudal system and the increasing desire of the rulers to provide their government with some effective legal system, its application became more widespread, until by the end of the XV Century it was the accepted system of the empire. The attempt to apply this ancient law to conditions utterly different from those of the time when it was formulated, and the continual conflict between the Roman law, the feudal customs and the remnants of Germanic legal ideas, naturally gave rise to a state of affairs which Luther could justly speak of as "a wilderness."

without them! These diffuse and far-fetched laws are only a burden to the people, and hinder causes more than they help them. I hope, however, that others have given this matter more thought and attention than I am able to do.

Theology

My friends the theologians have spared themselves pains and labor; they leave the Bible in peace and read the Sentences. I should think that the Sentences[1] ought to be the first study of young students in theology and the Bible ought to be the study for the doctors. But now it is turned around; the Bible comes first, and is put aside when the bachelor's degree is reached, and the Sentences come last. They are attached forever to the doctorate, and that with such a solemn obligation that a man who is not a priest may indeed read the Bible, but the Sentences a priest must read. A married man, I observe, could be a Doctor of the Bible, but under no circumstances a Doctor of the Sentences. What good fortune can we expect if we act so perversely and in this way put the Bible, the holy Word of God, so far to the rear? Moreover the pope commands, with many severe words, that his laws are to be read and used in the schools and the courts, but little is said of the Gospel. Thus it is the custom that in the schools and the courts the Gospel lies idle in the dust under the bench,[2] to the end that the pope's harmful laws may rule alone.

If we are called by the title of teachers[3] of Holy Scripture, then we ought to be compelled, in accordance with our name, to teach the Holy Scriptures and nothing else, although even this title is too proud and boastful and no one ought to be proclaimed and crowned teacher of Holy Scripture. Yet it might be suffered, if the work justified the name; but now, under the despotism of the Sentences, we find among the theologians more of heathen and human opinion than of the holy and certain doctrine of

[1] "Sentences" (Sententiae, libri sententiarum) was the title of the text-books in theology. Theological instruction was largely by way of comment on the most famous book of Sentences, that of Peter Lombard.

[2] Cf. Vol. I, p. 7.

[3] i. e., Doctors.

Scripture. What, then, are we to do? I know of no other way than humbly to pray God to give us Doctors of Theology. Pope, emperor and universities may make Doctors of Arts, of Medicine, of Laws, of the Sentences; but be assured that no one will make a Doctor of Holy Scripture, save only the Holy Ghost from heaven, as Christ says in John vi, "They must all be taught of God Himself." Now the Holy Ghost does not concern Himself about red or brown birettas[1] or other decorations, nor does He ask whether one is old or young, layman or priest, monk or secular, virgin or married; nay He spake of old by an ass, against the prophet who rode upon it. Would God that we were worthy to have such doctors given us, whether they were layman or priests, married or virgin. True, they now try to force the Holy Ghost into pope, bishops and doctors, although there is no sign or indication whatever that He is in them.

John 6:45

Num. 22:28

Theological Textbooks

The number of theological books must also be lessened, and a selection made of the best of them. For it is not many books or much reading that makes men learned; but it is good things, however little of them, often read, that make men learned in the Scriptures, and make them godly, too. Indeed the writings of all the holy fathers should be read only for a time, in order that through them we may be led to the Holy Scriptures. As it is, however, we read them only to be absorbed in them and never come to the Scriptures. We are like men who study the sign-posts and never travel the road. The dear fathers wished, by their writings, to lead us to the Scriptures, but we so use them as to be led away from the Scriptures, though the Scriptures alone are our vineyard in which we ought all to work and toil.

Schools

Above all, the foremost and most general subject of study, both in the higher and the lower schools, should be the Holy Scriptures, and for the young boys the Gospel. And would to God that every town had a girls' school also, in which the girls were taught the Gospel for an hour each

[1] The head-dress of the doctors.

day either in German or Latin. Indeed the schools, monasteries and nunneries began long ago with that end in view, and it was a praiseworthy and Christian purpose, as we learn from the story of St. Agnes[1] and other of the saints. That was the time of holy virgins and martyrs, and then it was well with Christendom; but now they[2] have come to nothing but praying and singing. Ought not every Christian at his ninth or tenth year to know the entire holy Gospel from which he derives his name[3] and his life? A spinner or a seamstress teaches her daughter the trade in her early years; but now even the great, learned prelates and bishops themselves do not know the Gospel.

O how unjustly we deal with these poor young people who are committed to us for direction and instruction! We must give a terrible accounting for our neglect to set the Word of God before them. They fare as Jeremiah says in Lamentations ii: "Mine eyes are grown weary with weeping, my bowels are terrified, my liver is poured out upon the ground, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, for the youth and the children perish in all the streets of the whole city; they said to their mothers, Where is bread and wine? and they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city and gave up the ghost in their mothers' bosom." This pitiful evil we do not see,—how even now the young folk in the midst of Christendom languish and perish miserably for want of the Gospel, in which we ought to be giving them constant instruction and training.

Lam. 2:11 ff.

Restriction of Number of Students

Moreover, if the universities were diligent in the study of Holy Scripture, we should not send everybody there, as we do when all we ask is numbers, and everyone wishes to have a doctor's degree; but we should send only the best qualified students, who have previously been well trained in the lower schools. A prince or city council ought to see to this, and permit only the well qualified to be sent. But where the

[1] See above, p. 118, note 2.
[2] i. e., The monasteries and nunneries.
[3] i. e.. The name of Christian.

Holy Scriptures do not rule, there I advise no one to send his son. Everyone not unceasingly busy with the Word of God must become corrupt; that is why the people who are in the universities and who are trained there are the kind of people they are. For this no one is to blame but the pope, the bishops and the prelates, who are charged with the training of the youth. For the universities ought to turn out only men who are experts in the Holy Scriptures, who can become bishops and priests, leaders in the fight against heretics, the devil and all the world. But where do you find this true? I greatly fear that the universities are wide gates of hell, if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scriptures and impress them on the youth.

The Pope and the Holy Roman Empire

26.[1] I know full well that the Roman crowd will make pretensions and great boasts about how the pope took the Holy Roman Empire from the Greek Emperor[2] and bestowed it on the Germans, for which honor and benevolence he is said to have justly deserved and obtained from the Germans submission and thanks and all good things. For this reason they will, perhaps, undertake to throw to the winds all attempts to reform them, and will not allow us to think about anything but the bestowal of the Roman Empire. For this cause they have heretofore persecuted and oppressed many a worthy emperor so arbitrarily and arrogantly that it is pity to tell of it, and with the same adroitness they have made themselves overlords of all the temporal powers and authorities, contrary to the Holy Gospel. Of this too I must therefore speak.

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[1] This section did not appear in the first edition; see Introduction, p. 59.

[2] Charles the Great, King of the Franks, was crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in the year 800 A. D. He was a German, but regarded himself successor to the line of emperors who had ruled at Rome. The fiction was fostered by the popes, and the German kings, after receiving the papal coronation, were called Roman Emperors. From this came the name of the German Empire of the Middle Ages, "the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." The popes of the later Middle Ages claimed that the bestowal of the imperial dignity lay in the power of the pope, and Pope Clement V (1313) even claimed that in the event of a vacancy the pope was the possessor of the imperial power (cf. above, p. 109). On the whole subject see BRYCE, *Holy Roman Empire*, 2d ed. (1904), and literature there cited.

There is no doubt that the true Roman Empire, which the writings of the prophets foretold in Numbers xxiv and in Daniel, has long since been overthrown and brought to an end, as Balaam clearly prophesied in Numbers xxiv, when he said: "The Romans shall come and overthrow the Jews; and afterwards they also shall be destroyed." That was brought to pass by the Goths,[1] but especially when the Turkish Empire arose almost a thousand years ago;[2] then in time Asia and Africa fell away, and finally Venice arose, and there remained to Rome nothing of its former power.

Dan. 2:39 ff. Num. 24:24

Now when the pope could not subdue to his arrogant will the Greeks and the emperor at Constantinople, who was hereditary Roman Emperor, he bethought himself of this device, viz., to rob him of his empire and his title and turn it over to the Germans, who were at that time warlike and of good repute, so as to bring the power of the Roman Empire under his control and give it away as a fief. So too it turned out. It was taken away from the emperor at Constantinople and its name and title were given to us Germans. Thereby we became the servants of the pope, and there is now a second Roman Empire, which the pope has built upon the Germans; for the other, which was first, has long since fallen, as I have said.

So then the Roman See has its will. It has taken possession of Rome, driven out the German Emperor and bound him with oaths not to dwell at Rome. He is to be Roman Emperor, and yet he is not to have possession of Rome, and besides he is at all times to be dependent upon the caprice of the pope and his followers, so that we have the name and they have the land and cities. They have always abused our simplicity to serve their own arrogance and tyranny, and they call us mad Germans, who let ourselves be made apes and fools at their bidding.

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[1] The city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410.

[2] Luther is characteristically careless about his chronology. By the "Turkish Empire" he means the Mohammedan power.

Ah well! For God the Lord it is a small thing to toss empires and principalities to and fro! He is so generous with them that once in a while He gives a kingdom to a knave and takes it from a good man, sometimes by the treachery of wicked, faithless men and sometimes by heredity, as we read of the Kingdoms of Persia and Greece, and of almost all kingdoms; and Daniel ii and iv says: "He Who ruleth over all things dwelleth in heaven, and it is He alone Who changeth kingdoms, tosseth them to and fro, and maketh them." Since, therefore, no one can think it a great thing to have a kingdom given him, especially if he is a Christian, we Germans too cannot be puffed up because a new Roman Empire is bestowed on us; for in His eyes it is a trifling gift, which He often gives to the most unworthy, as Daniel iv says: "All who dwell upon the earth are in His eyes as nothing, and He has power in all the kingdoms of men, to give them to whomsoever He will."

Dan. 2:21; 4:14

Dan. 4:35

But although the pope unjustly and by violence robbed the true emperor of his Roman Empire, or of its name, and gave it to us Germans, it is certain, nevertheless, that in this matter God has used the pope's wickedness to give such an empire to the German nation, and after the fall of the first Roman Empire, to set up another, which still exists. And although we gave no occasion to this wickedness of the popes, and did not understand their false aims and purposes, nevertheless, through this papal trickery and roguery, we have already paid too dearly for our empire, with incalculable bloodshed, with the suppression of our liberty, with the risk and robbery of all our goods, especially the goods of the churches and canonries, and with the suffering of unspeakable deception and insult. We have the name of the empire, but the pope has our wealth, honor, body, life, soul and all that is ours. So we Germans are to be cheated in the trade.[1] What the popes sought was to be emperors, and

[1] So sol man die Deutschen teuschen und mit teuschen teuschenn, i. e., made Germans (Deutsche) by cheating (teuschen) them.

since they could not manage that, they at least succeeded in setting themselves over the emperors.

Because then, the empire has been given us without our fault, by the providence of God and the plotting of evil men, I would not advise that we give it up, but rather that we rule it wisely and in the fear of God, so long as it shall please Him. For, as has been said, it matters not to Him where an empire comes from; it is His will that it shall be ruled. Though the popes took it dishonestly from others, nevertheless we did not get it dishonestly. It is given us by the will of God through evil-minded men; and we have more regard for God's will than for the treacherous purpose of the popes, who, in bestowing it, wished to be emperors themselves, and more than emperors, and only to fool and mock us with the name. The King of Babylon also seized his empire by robbery and force; yet it was God's will that it should be ruled by the holy princes, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael; much more then is it His will that this empire be ruled by the Christian princes of Germany, regardless whether the pope stole it, or got it by robbery, or made it anew. It is all God's ordering, which came to pass before we knew of it.

Dan. 3:30; 5:29

Therefore the pope and his followers may not boast that they have done a great favor to the German nation by the bestowal of this Roman Empire. First, because they did not mean it for our good, but were rather taking advantage of our simplicity in order to strengthen themselves in their proud designs against the Roman Emperor at Constantinople, from whom the pope godlessly and lawlessly took this empire, a thing which he had no right to do. Second, because the pope's intention was not to give us the empire, but to get it for himself, that he might bring all our power, our freedom, wealth, body and soul into subjection to himself and use us (if God had not prevented) to subdue all the world. He clearly says so himself in his decretals, and he has attempted it, by many evil wiles, with a number of the German emperors. How beautifully we

Germans have been taught our German! When we thought to be lords, we became slaves of the most deceitful tyrants; we have the name, title and insignia of the empire, but the pope has its treasures, its authority, its law and its liberty. So the pope gobbles the kernel, and we play with the empty hulls.

Now may God, Who by the wiles of tyrants has tossed this empire into our lap, and charged us with the ruling of it, help us to live up to the name, title and insignia, to rescue our liberty, and to show the Romans, for once, what it is that we, through them, have received from God! They boast that they have bestowed on us an empire. So be it, then! If it is true, then let the pope give us Rome and everything else which he has got from the empire; let him free our land from his intolerable taxing and robbing, and give us back our liberty, authority, wealth, honor, body and soul; let the empire be what an empire should be, and let his words and pretensions be fulfilled!

If he will not do that, then why all this shamming, these false and lying words and juggler's tricks? Is he not satisfied with having so rudely led this noble nation by the nose these many hundred years without ceasing? It does not follow that the pope must be above an emperor because he makes or crowns him. The prophet Samuel at God's command anointed and crowned Kings Saul and David, and yet he was their subject; and the prophet Nathan anointed King Solomon, but was not set over him on that account; Elisha too had one of his servants anoint Jehu King of Israel, and yet they remained obedient and subject to him. Except in the case of the pope, it has never happened in all the world's history that he who consecrated or crowned the king was over the king. He lets himself be crowned pope by three cardinals, who are under him, and he is nevertheless their superior. Why then should he, contrary to the example which he himself sets, and contrary to the custom and teaching of all the world and of the Scriptures, exalt himself above temporal authorities, or the empire, simply

1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13

1 Kings 1:38 f.

2 Kings 9:1 ff.

because he crowns or consecrates the emperor? It is enough that he should be the emperor's superior in divine things, to wit, in preaching, teaching and administering the sacraments, in which things, indeed, any bishop or priest is over every other man, as St. Ambrose in his See was over the emperor Theodosius,[1] and the prophet Nathan over David, and Samuel over Saul. Therefore, let the German Emperor be really and truly emperor, and let not his authority or his sword be put down by this blind pretension of papal hypocrites, as though they were to be excepted from his dominion and themselves direct the temporal sword in all things.]

Economic and Social Reforms

27. Enough has now been said about the failings of the clergy, though more of them can and will be found if these are properly considered. We would say something too about the failings of the temporal estate.

Luxury in Dress

1. There is great need of a general law and decree of the German nation against the extravagance and excess in dress, by which so many nobles and rich men are impoverished.[2] God has given to us, as to other lands, enough wool, hair, flax andevery thing else which properly serves for the seemly and honorable dress of every rank, so that we do not need to spend and waste such enormous sums for silk and velvet and golden ornaments and other foreign wares. I believe that even if the pope had not robbed us Germans with his intolerable exactions, we should still have our hands more than full with these domestic robbers, the silk and velvet merchants.[3] In the matter of clothes, as we see, everybody wants to be equal to everybody else, and pride and envy are aroused and increased among us, as we deserve. All this and much more misery would be avoided if our curiosity would only let us be thankful, and be satisfied with the goods which God has given us.

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[1] See Cambridge Mediæval History, I (1911), pp. 244 f.

[2] Such a law as Luther here suggests was proposed to the Diet of Worms (1521). Text in Wrede, Reischstagsakten, II, 335–341.

[3] Cf. Luther's Sermon von Kaufhandlung und Wucher, of 1524. (Weim. Ed. XV, pp. 293 ff)

2. In like manner it is also necessary to restrict the spice-traffic[1] which is another of the great ships in which money is carried out of German lands. There grows among us, by God's grace, more to eat and drink than in any other land, and just as choice and good. Perhaps the proposals that I make may seem foolish and impossible and give the impression that I want to suppress the greatest of all trades, that of commerce; but I am doing what I can. If reforms are not generally introduced, then let every one who is willing reform himself. I do not see that many good customs have ever come to a land through commerce, and in ancient times God made His people of Israel dwell away from the sea on this account, and did not let them engage much in commerce.

The Spice Trade

3. But the greatest misfortune of the German nation is certainly the traffic in annuities.[2] If that did not exist many a man would have to leave unbought his silks, velvets, golden ornaments, spices and ornaments of every sort. It has not existed much over a hundred years, and has already brought almost all princes, cities, endowed institutions, nobles and their heirs to poverty, misery and ruin; if it shall continue for another hundred years Germany cannot possibly have a p f e n n i g left and we shall certainly have to devour one another. The devil invented the practice, and the pope, by confirming it,[3] has injured the whole world.

The Traffic in Annuities

Therefore I ask and pray that everyone open his eyes to see the ruin of himself, his children and his heirs, which not only stands before the door, but already haunts the house, and that emperor, princes, lords and cities do their part

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[1] Spices were one of the chief articles of foreign commerce in the XVI Century. The discovery of the cape-route to India had given the Portuguese a practical monopoly of this trade. A comparative statement of the cost of spices for a period of years was reported to the Diet of Nürnberg (1523). See WREDE, op. cit., III, 576.

[2] The Z i n s k a u f or R e n t e n k a u f was a means for evading the prohibition of usury. The buyer purchased an annuity, but the purchase price was not regarded as a loan, for it could not be recalled, and the annual payments could not therefore be called interest.

[3] The practice was legalised by the Lateran Council, 1512.

that this trade be condemned as speedily as possible, and henceforth prevented, regardless whether or not the pope, with all his law and unlaw, is opposed to it, and whether or not benefices or church foundations are based upon it. It is better that there should be in a city one living based on an honest freehold or revenue, than a hundred based on an annuity; indeed a living based on an annuity is worse and more grievous than twenty based on freeholds. In truth this traffic in rents must be a sign and symbol that the world, for its grievous sins, has been sold to the devil, so that both temporal and spiritual possessions must fail us, and yet we do not notice it at all.

Here, too, we must put a bit in the mouth of the Fuggers and similar corporations.[1] How is it possible that in the lifetime of a single man such great possessions, worthy of a king, can be piled up, and yet everything be done legally and according to God's will? I am not a mathematician, but I do not understand how a man with a hundred gulden can make a profit of twenty gulden in one year, nay, how with one gulden he can make another;[2] and that, too, by another way than agriculture or cattle-raising, in which increase of

[1] The XVI Century was the hey-day of the great trading-companies, among which the Fuggers of Augsburg (see above, p. 97, note 5) easily took first place. The effort of these companies was directed toward securing monopolies in the staple articles of commerce, and their ability to finance large enterprises made it possible for them to gain practical control of the home markets. The sharp rise in the cost of living which took place on the first half of the XVI Century was laid at their door. The Diet of Cologne (1512) had passed a stringent law against monopolies which had, however, failed to suppress them. The Diet of Worms (1521) debated the subject (WREDE, Reichstagsakten II, pp. 355 ff.) "in somewhat heated language" (ibid., 842), but failed to agree upon methods of suppression. The subject was discussed again at the Diet of Nürnberg (1523) and various remedies were proposed (ibid., III, 556–599).

[2] The profits of the trading-companies were enormous. The 9 per cent. annually of the Welser (EHRENBERG, Zeitalter der Fugger, I, 195), pales into insignificance beside the 1634 per cent. by which the fortune of the Fuggers grew in twenty-one years (SCHULTE, Die Fugger in Rom, I, 3). In 1511 a certain Bartholomew Rem invested 900 gulden in the Hochstetter company of Augsburg; by 1517 he claimed 33,000 gulden profit. The company was willing to settle at 26,000, and the resulting litigation caused the figures to become public (WREDE, op. cit., II, 842, note 4; III, pp. 574 f.). On Luther's view of capitalism see ECK, Introduction to the Sermon von Kaufshandlung und Wucher, in Berl. Ed., VII, 494–513.

wealth depends not on human wits, but on God's blessing. I commend this to the men of affairs. I am a theologian, and find nothing to blame in it except its evil and offending appearance, of which St. Paul says, "Avoid every appearance or show of evil." This I know well, that it would be much more pleasing to God if we increased agriculture and diminished commerce, and that they do much better who, according to the Scriptures, till the soil and seek their living from it, as was said to us and to all men in Adam, "Accursed be the earth when thou laborest therein, it shall bear thee thistles and thorns, and in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." There is still much land lying untilled.

1 Thess. 5:22

Gen. 3:17 ff.

Excesses in Eating and Drinking

4. Next comes the abuse of eating and drinking[1] which gives us Germans a bad reputation in foreign lands, as though it were our special vice. Preaching cannot stop it; it has become too common, and has got too firmly the upper hand. The waste of money which it causes would be a small thing, were it not followed by other sins,—murder, adultery, stealing, irreverence and all the vices. The temporal sword can do something to prevent it; or else it will be as Christ says: "The last day shall come like a secret snare, when they shall be eating and drinking, marrying and wooing, building and planting, buying and selling." It is so much like that now that I verily believe the judgment day is at the door, though men are thinking least of all about it.

Luke 21:34 f.

The Social Evil

5. Finally, is it not a pitiful thing that we Christians should maintain among us open and common houses of prostitution, though all of us are baptised unto chastity? I know very well what some say to this, to wit, that it is not the custom of any one people, that it is hard to break up, that it is better that there should be such houses than that married women, or maidens, or those of more honorable estate should be outraged. But should not the temporal,

[1] The Diets of Augsburg (1500) and Cologne (1512) had passed edicts against drunkenness. A committee of the Diet of Worms (1521) recommended that these earlier edicts be reaffirmed (Wrede, op. cit., II, pp. 343 f.), but the Diet adjourned without acting on the recommendation (ibid., 737)

Christian government consider that in this heathen way the evil is not to be controlled? If the people of Israel could exist without such an abomination, why could not Christian people do as much? Nay, how do many cities, towns and villages exist without such houses? Why should not great cities also exist without them?

In this, and in the other matters above mentioned, I have tried to point out how many good works the temporal government could do, and what should be the duty of every government, to the end that every one may learn what an awful responsibility it is to rule, and to have high station. What good would it do that an overlord were in his own life as holy as St. Peter, if he have not the purpose diligently to help his subjects in these matters? His very authority will condemn him! For it is the duty of the authorities to seek the highest good of their subjects. But if the authorities were to consider how the young people might be brought together in marriage, the hope of entering the married state would greatly help every one to endure and to resist temptation.

Celibacy and Its Abuses

But now every man is drawn to the priesthood or the monastic life, and among them, I fear, there is not one in a hundred who has any other reason than that he seeks a living, and doubts that he will ever be able to support himself in the estate of matrimony. Therefore they live wildly enough beforehand, and wish, as they say, to "wear out their lust," but rather wear it in,[1] as experience shows. I find the proverb true, "Despair makes most of the monks and priests"[2]; and so things are as we see them.

My faithful counsel is that, in order to avoid many sins which have become very common, neither boy nor maid should take the vow of chastity, or of the "spiritual life," before the age of thirty years.[3] It is, as St. Paul says, a pecu-

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[1] Sie wollen ausbuben, so sich's vielmehr hineinbubt.
[2] Cf. Müller, Luther's theol. Quellen, 1912, ch. I.
[3] In the Confitendi Ratio Luther had set the age for men at eighteen to twenty, for women at fifteen to sixteen years. See Vol. I, p. 100.

liar gift. Therefore let him whom God does not constrain, put off becoming a cleric and taking the vows. Nay, I will go farther and say, If you trust God so little that you are not willing to support yourself as a married man, and wish to become a cleric only because of this distrust, then for the sake of your own soul, I beg of you not to become a cleric, but rather a farmer, or whatever else you please. For if to obtain your temporal support you must have one measure of trust in God, you must have ten measures of trust to continue in the life of a cleric. If you do not trust God to support you in the world, how will you trust him to support you in the Church? Alas, unbelief and distrust spoil everything and lead us into all misery, as we see in every estate of life! 1 Cor. 7:7

Much could be said of this miserable condition. The young people have no one to care for them. They all do as they please, and the government is of as much use to them as if it did not exist; and yet this should be the chief concern of pope, bishops, lords and councils. They wish to rule far and wide, and yet to help no one. O, what a rare bird will a lord and ruler be in heaven just on this account, even though he build a hundred churches for God and raise up all the dead!

Conclusion

[Let this suffice for this time! Of what the temporal powers and the nobility ought to do, I think I have said enough in the little book, On Good Works.[1] There is room for improvement in their lives and in their rule, and yet the abuses of the temporal power are not to be compared with those of the spiritual power, as I have there shown.][2]

I think too that I have pitched my song in a high key, have made many propositions which will be thought impossible and have attacked many things too sharply. But what

[1] Translated in this edition, Vol. I, pp. 184 ff; see especially pp. 266 ff.
[2] These sentences did not appear in the first edition.

am I to do? I am in duty bound to speak. If I were able, these are the things I should wish to do. I prefer the wrath of the world to the wrath of God; they can do no more than take my life.[1] Many times heretofore I have made overtures of peace to my opponents; but as I now see, God has through them compelled me to open my mouth wider and wider and give them enough to say, bark, shout and write, since they have nothing else to do. Ah well, I know another little song about Rome and about them![2] If their ears itch for it I will sing them that song too, and pitch the notes to the top of the scale. Understandest thou, dear Rome, what I mean?

I have many times offered my writings for investigation and judgment, but it has been of no use. To be sure, I know that if my cause is just, it must be condemned on earth, and approved only by Christ in heaven; for all the Scriptures show that the cause of Christians and of Christendom must be judged by God alone. Such a cause has never yet been approved by men on earth, but the opposition has always been too great and strong. It is my greatest care and fear that my cause may remain uncondemned, by which I should know for certain that it was not yet pleasing to God.

Therefore let them boldly go to work,—pope, bishop, priest, monk and scholar! They are the right people to persecute the truth, as they have ever done.

God give us all a Christian mind, and especially to the Christian nobility of the German nation a right spiritual courage to do the best that can be done for the poor Church. Amen.

Wittenberg, 1520.

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[1] See Letter to Staupitz, Vol. I, p. 43.

[2] This "little song" is the Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. See below, pp. 170 ff.

A PRELUDE

ON

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

OF

THE CHURCH

1520

INTRODUCTION

In the Open Letter to the Christian Nobility Luther overthrew the three walls behind which Rome sat entrenched in her spiritual-temporal power; in the Babylonian Captivity of the Church he enters and takes her central stronghold and sanctuary—the sacramental system by which she accompanied and controlled her members from the cradle to the grave; only then could he set forth, in language of almost lyrical rapture, the Liberty of a Christian Man.

The first of these three great reformatory treatises of the year 1520, as they have been called, closed with the words: "I know another little song about Rome, and if their ears itch to hear it I will sing it for them, and pitch it in a high key. Dost thou take my meaning, beloved Rome?" (See above, p. 164.) That some ears were itching to hear his little song was brought home to Luther especially by two writings, the one appearing in the summer of 1520, the other published in the previous autumn, but not reaching Wittenberg until some months later.

The former came from the pen of Augustin Alveld, that "celebrated Romanist of Leipzig," against whom Luther had fulminated in The Papacy at Rome, promising further disclosures if Alveld "came again." (See Vol. I, p. 393.) He came again, this time with a Tractatus de communione sub utraque specie,—date of dedication, June 23, 1520. "The Leipzig ass has set up a fresh braying against me, full of blasphemies"; thus Luther describes it in a letter to Spalatin, July 22, 1520. (Enders, Luther's Briefwechsel, II, no. 328.)

The other work was the anonymous tract of a "certain Italian friar of Cremona," who has only recently been identified as Isidoro Isolani, a Dominican hailing from Milan, who taught theology in various Italian cities, wrote a number of controversial works and died in 1528. (See Fr. Lauchert, Die italienischen literarischen Gegner Luthers, Freiburg, 1912.) The title of his tract is, Revocatio Martini Lutheri Augustiniani ad sanctam Sedem; its date, Cremona, November 20, 1520, according to Enders, which is a mistake for November 22, 1519. Its beginning and close, which have epistolary character, are printed in Enders, II, no. 366, and one paragraph from each is translated in Smith, Luther's Correspondence, I, no. 199.

These two treatises may be regarded as the immediate occasion for the writing of the Babylonian Captivity, which is, however, in no

sense a direct reply to either of them. "I will not reply to Alveld," Luther writes on August 5 to Spalatin, "but he will be the occasion of my publishing something by which the vipers will be more irritated than ever." (ENDERS, II, no. 335; SMITH, I, no. 283.) Indeed, he had promised some such work more than half a year before, in a letter to Spalatin of December 18, 1519: "There is no reason why you or any one else should expect from me a treatise on the other sacraments [besides baptism, the Lord's supper, and penance] until I am taught by what text I can prove that they are sacraments. I regard none of the others as a sacrament, for there is no sacrament save where there is a direct divine promise, exercising our faith. We can have no intercourse with God except by the word of Him promising, and by the faith of man receiving the promise. At another time you shall hear more about their fables of the seven sacraments." (ENDERS, II, no. 254; SMITH, I, no. 206.)

Thus the Prelude grows under his hand and assumes the form of an elaborate examination of the whole sacramental system of the Church. He makes short work of his two opponents, and after a few pages of delicious irony, of which Erasmus was suspected in some quarters of being the author, he turns his back on them and addresses himself to a positive and constructive treatment of his larger theme, lenient toward all non-essentials, but inexorable with respect to everything truly essential, that is, scriptural. The Captivity thus represents the culmination of Luther's reformatory thinking on the theological side, as the Nobility does on the national, and the Liberty on the religious side. It sums up and carries forward all of his previous writings on the sacraments, just as, nine years later, the Catechisms gathered up and moulded into classic form his writings on catechetical subjects. Passage after passage, often whole pages, from the Resolutiones disp., the Treatise on Baptism, the Confitendi Ratio, the Treatise on the New Testament, the Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament, are transferred bodily to this new and definitive work, and find in it the goal toward which they had been consciously or unconsciously tending. The reader is referred to a fine comparative study in KÖSTLIN'S Theology of Luther (English trans.), I, 388–409. The title is a reminiscence from the Resolutiones super prop. xiii., of 1519,—"absit ista plus quam babylonica captivitas!" The sense in which the work is called a "prelude" is explained on page 176; the theologian in Luther could not deny the musician, he goes into battle singing and comes back with the stanza of a hymn upon his lips.

The Captivity marks Luther's final and irreparable break with the Church of Rome, and it is not without a peculiar significance that in the same letter to Spalatin, of October 3d, in which he mentions the arrival in Leipzig of Eck armed with the papal bull, he announces the publication of his book on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church

for the following Saturday—October 6th. (ENDERS, II, no. 350; SMITH, I, no. 303.)

While the Nobility, addressed to the German nation as such, was written in the language of the people, the Captivity, as becomes a theological treatise, is composed in Latin, just as later the Liberty, affecting the religious life of the individual, whether layman or theologian, is sent out in both German and Latin.

A translation into German appeared in the following year—the work of the Franciscan, Thomas Murner (on whom see THEOD. v. LIEBENAU, Der Franziskaner Thomas Murner, Freiburg, 1913). Luther calls the Franciscan his "venomous foe" and accuses him of making the translation in order to bring him into disrepute. This charge Luther makes in his answer to Henry VIII's Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Mart. Lutherum (1521), the royal theologian's reply to the Babylonian Captivity, for which he won from the pope the proud title of "Defender of the Faith."

The translation which follows is based on the Latin text as given in CLEMEN'S "student-edition"—Luthers Werke in Auswahl (Bonn, 1912–3), I, 426–512, which reproduces, though by no means slavishly, the text of the Weimar Edition (Vol. VI), which, together with the Erlangen Edition (opera var. arg., V), has been compared. The German St. Louis Edition (Vol. XIX) has been consulted, and especially the admirable German rendering of KAWERAU in the Berlin Edition (Vol. II) as well as the careful literal translation of LEMME, Die drei grossen Reformationsschriften Luthers vom Jahre 1520, 2. ed. (Gotha, 1884). Like the last mentioned, WACE and BUCHHEIM'S English translation (London, 1896) is incomplete, and besides is not always accurate; the Captivity is not contained in COLE'S Select Works. The catalogue of the British Museum notes no early English translation. KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU'S (1903) and BERGER'S (1895) lives should be consulted; the former for the historical setting and full analysis, the latter for a fine appreciation of this as of the other two reformatory treatises of this year. For the theological development, beside KÖSTLIN'S work mentioned above, and TSCHACKERT, Entstehung der luth. und ref. Kirchenlehre (1910), compare the exhaustive article Sakramente, by KATTENBUSCH, in Prot. Realencyklopädie, 3. ed., XVII, 349–81.

The treatise is here Englished in its entirety, including those portions of the section on marriage which are frequently omitted. The homeless paragraph on page 260, whose proper location is not found even in the Weimar Edition nor in Clemen, we have placed in a foot-note, following the example of Kawerau.

ALBERT T. W. STEINHAEUSER.

ALLENTOWN, PA.

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

1520

JESUS

Martin Luther, Augustinian,

to his friend,

Herman Tulich,[1]

Greeting

Willy nilly, I am compelled to become every day more learned, with so many and such able masters vying with one another to improve my mind. Some two years ago I wrote a little book on indulgences,[2] which I now deeply regret having published; for at the time I was still sunk in a mighty superstitious veneration for the Roman tyranny and held that indulgences should not be altogether rejected, seeing they were approved by the common consent of men. Nor was this to be wondered at, for I was then engaged single-handed in my Sisyphean task. Since then, however, through the kindness of Sylvester and the friars,[3] who so strenuously defended indulgences, I have come to see that they are nothing but an imposture of the Roman sycophants by which they play havoc with men's faith and fortunes. Would to God I might prevail upon the booksellers and upon all my readers to burn up the whole of my

[1] Born at Steinheim, near Paderborn, in Westphalia; a proofreader in Melchior Lotter's printing-house at Leipzig, with whose oldest son he went to Wittenberg in 1519; professor of poetry at the university; rector of the same, 1525; one of Luther's staunchest supporters; rector of the school at Lüneberg, 1532 until his death in 1540. Compare ENDERS, Luther's Briefwechsel, II, 490; TSCHACKERT, op. cit., 203, and literature in CLEMEN, I, 426.

[2] Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute, 1518; others think he refers to the Sermon von Ablass und Gnade, of the same year.

[3] Sylvester Prierias and the Dominicans. Comp. KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, Luther, I, 189 ff.

writings on indulgences and to substitute for them this proposition: INDULGENCES ARE A KNAVISH TRICK OF THE ROMAN SYCOPHANTS.

Next, Eck and Emser, with their fellows, undertook to instruct me concerning the primacy of the pope. Here too, not to prove ungrateful to such learned folk, I acknowledge how greatly I have profited by their labors. For, while denying the divine authority of the papacy, I had yet admitted its human authority.[1] But after hearing and reading the subtle subtleties of these coxcombs with which they adroitly prop their idol—for in these matters my mind is not altogether unteachable—I now know of a certainty that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon[2] and the power of Nimrod the mighty hunter.[3] Once more, therefore, that all may fall out to my friends' advantage, I beg both booksellers and readers to burn what I have published on that subject and to hold to this proposition: THE PAPACY IS THE MIGHTY HUNTING OF THE ROMAN BISHOP. This follows from the arguments of Eck, Emser and the Leipzig lecturer[4] on the Holy Scriptures.

Gen. 10:9

Now they are putting me to school again and teaching me about communion in both kinds and other weighty subjects. And I must fall to with might and main, so as not to hear these my pedagogues without profit.

A certain Italian friar of Cremona[5] has written a "Revocation of Martin Luther to the Holy See"—that is, a revocation in which not I revoke anything (as the words declare) but he revokes me. That is the kind of Latin the Italians are now beginning to write.[6] Another friar, a German of Leipzig, that same lecturer, you know, on the whole canon of the Scriptures, has written a book against

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[1] Resolutiones super prop. xiii., 1519.
[2] Comp. The Papacy at Rome, Vol. I, p. 392.
[3] Comp. FR. LEPP, Schlagwörter des Ref.zeitalters (Leipzig, 1908), p. 62.
[4] The Franciscan Augustin Alveld. See Introduction, and compare LEMMENS, Pater Aug. v. Alveld (Freiburg, 1899).
[5] Isidoro Isolani. See Introduction.
[6] Luther pokes fun at the use of revocatio with an objective genitive.

me concerning the sacrament in both kinds, and is planning, I understand, still greater and more marvelous things. The Italian was canny enough not to set down his name, fearing perhaps the fate of Cajetan and Sylvester.[1] But the Leipzig man, as becomes a fierce and valiant German, boasts on his ample title-page of his name, his career, his saintliness, his scholarship, his office, glory, honor, ay, almost of his very clogs.[2] Here I shall doubtless gain no little information, since indeed his dedicatory epistle is addressed to the Son of God Himself. On so familiar a footing are these saints with Christ Who reigns in heaven! Moreover, methinks I hear three magpies chattering in this book; the first in good Latin, the second in better Greek, the third in purest Hebrew.[3] What think you, my Herman, is there for me to do but to prick up my ears? The thing emanates from Leipzig, from the Observance of the Holy Cross.[4]

Fool that I was, I had hitherto thought it would be well if a general council decided that the sacrament be administered to the laity in both kinds.[5] The more than learned friar would set me right, and declares that neither Christ nor the apostles commanded or commended the administration of both kinds to the laity; it was, therefore, left to the judgment of the Church what to do or not to do in this matter, and the Church must be obeyed. These are his words.

You will perhaps ask, what madness has entered into the man, or against whom he is writing, since I have not con-

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[1] See above, p. 58, and compare PRESERVED SMITH, Luther's Correspondence, Vol. I, letter no. 265.

[2] Cf. The Papacy at Rome, Vol. I, p. 337. The title-page of Alveld's treatise contained twenty-six lines.

[3] A satiric reference to a section in Alveld's treatise, on the name of Jesus, which he spells IHSVH and brings proofs for this form from the three languages mentioned. See SECKENDORF, Hist. Luth., lib. I, sect. 27, § lxx, add. ii.

[4] Alveld calls himself, on his title-page, Franciscanus regularis observantiae Sanctae Crucis. The Observantines were Franciscan monks of the stricter rule, who separated from the Conventuals in the XV. Century. See Prot. Realencyklopädie[3], VI, 213 ff.

[5] In the Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament; see above, p. 9.

demned the use of one kind, but have left the decision about the use of both kinds to the judgment of the Church—the very thing he attempts to assert and which he turns against me. My answer is, that this sort of argument is common to all those who write against Luther; they assert the very things they assail, or they set up a man of straw whom they may attack. Thus Sylvester and Eck and Emser, thus the theologians of Cologne and Louvain;[1] and if this friar had not been of the same kidney he would never have written against Luther.

Yet in one respect this man has been happier than his fellows. For in undertaking to prove that the use of both kinds is neither commanded nor commended, but left to the will of the Church, he brings forward passages of Scripture to prove that by the command of Christ one kind only was appointed for the laity. So that it is true, according to this new interpreter of the Scriptures, that one kind was n o t commanded, and at the same time w a s commanded, by Christ! This novel sort of argument is, as you know, the particular forte of the Leipzig dialecticians. Did not Emser in his earlier book[2] profess to write of me in a friendly spirit, and then, after I had convicted him of filthy envy and foul lying, did he not openly acknowledge in his later book,[3] written to refute my arguments, that he had written in both a friendly and an unfriendly spirit? A sweet fellow, forsooth, as you know.

But hearken to our distinguished distinguisher of "kinds," for whom the will of the Church and a command of Christ, and a command of Christ and no command of Christ, are all one and the same! How ingeniously he proves that only one kind is to be given to the laity, by the command of Christ, that is, by the will of the Church. He puts it in capital letters, thus: THE INFALLIBLE FOUNDATION. Thereupon he treats John vi with incredible wisdom, in

[1] The universities of Cologne and Louvain had ratified Eck's "victory" over Luther at the Leipzig Disputation. See KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, I, 266, 298.

[2] De disputatione Lipsicensi, 1519.

[3] A venatione Luteriana Aegocerotis assertio, 1519.

which passage Christ speaks of the bread from heaven and the bread of life, which is He Himself. The learned fellow not only refers these words to the sacrament of
John 6:35, 41, 51 the altar, but because Christ says, "I am the living bread," and not, "I am the living cup," he actually concludes that we have in this passage the institution of the sacrament in only one kind for the laity. But there
John 6:55 follow the words,—"My flesh is meat indeed, and my
John 6:53 blood is drink indeed," and, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood"; and when it dawned upon the good friar that these words speak undeniably for both kinds and against one kind—presto! how happily and learnedly he slips out of the quandary by asserting that in these words Christ means to say only that whoever receives the one kind receives under it both flesh and blood. This he puts for the "infallible foundation" of a structure well worthy of the holy and heavenly Observance.

Now prithee, herefrom learn with me that Christ, in John vi, enjoins the sacrament in one kind, yet in such wise that His commanding it means leaving it to the will of the Church; and further, that Christ is speaking in this chapter only of the laity and not of the priests. For to the latter the living bread from heaven does not pertain, but presumably the deadly bread from hell! And how is it with the deacons and subdeacons, who are neither laymen nor priests?[1] According to this brilliant writer, they ought to use neither the one kind nor both kinds! You see, dear Tulich, this novel and observant method of treating Scripture.

But learn this, too,—that Christ is speaking in John vi of the sacrament of the altar; although He Himself teaches that His words refer to faith in the Word made flesh, for
John 6:29 He says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." But our Leipzig professor of the Scriptures must be permitted to prove anything he pleases

[1] Some theologians—e. g., Cajetan and Durandus—doubted whether the Sacrament of Order was received by deacons; the Council of Trent decided against them.—Cath. Encyclop., IV, 550.

from any Scripture passage whatsoever. For he is an Anaxagorian, or rather an Aristotelian[1] theologian, for whom nouns and verbs, interchanged, mean the same thing and any thing. So aptly does he cite Scripture proof-texts throughout the whole of his book, that if he set out to prove the presence of Christ in the sacrament, he would not hesitate to commence thus: "Here beginneth the book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine." All his quotations are as apt as this one would be, and the wiseacre imagines he is adorning his drivel with the multitude of his quotations. The rest I pass over, lest you should smother in the filth of this vile cloaca.

In conclusion, he brings forward 1 Corinthians xi, where Paul says he received from the Lord, and delivered to the Corinthians, the use of both the bread and the cup. Here again our distinguisher of kinds, treating the Scriptures with his usual brilliance, teaches that Paul did not deliver, but permitted both kinds. Do you ask where he gets his proof? Out of his own head, as he did in the case of John vi. For it does not behoove this lecturer to give a reason for his assertions; he belongs to the order of those who teach and prove all things by their visions.[2] Accordingly we are here taught that the Apostle, in this passage, addressed not the whole Corinthian congregation, but the laity alone —but then he "permitted" nothing at all to the clergy, and they are deprived of the sacrament altogether!—and further, that, according to a new kind of grammar, "I have received from the Lord" means "It is permitted by the Lord," and "I have delivered it to you" means "I have permitted it to you." I pray you, mark this well. For by this method, not only the Church, but every passing knave will be at liberty, according to this magister, to turn all the commands, institutions and ordinances of Christ and the apostles into a mere "permission." 1 Cor. 11:23

[1] For Luther's opinion of Aristotle see above, pp. 146 f.

[2] The Franciscans are meant. The allusion may be to the seraphic vision of St. Francis.

I perceive, therefore, that this man is driven by an angel of Satan, and that he and his partners seek but to make a name for themselves through me, as men who were worthy to cross swords with Luther. But their hopes shall be dashed: I shall ignore them and not mention their names from henceforth even for ever. This one reply shall suffice me for all their books. If they be worthy of it, I pray Christ in His mercy to bring them to a sound mind; if not, I pray that they may never leave off writing such books, and that the enemies of the truth may never deserve to read any other. It is a popular and true saying,

> This I know of a truth—whenever with filth I contended,
> Victor or vanquished, alike, came I defiled from the fray.

And, since I perceive that they have an abundance of leisure and of writing-paper, I shall see to it that they may have ample opportunity for writing. I shall run on before, and while they are celebrating a glorious victory over one of my so-called heresies, I shall be meanwhile devising a new one. For I too am desirous that these gallant leaders in battle should win to themselves many titles and decorations. Therefore, while they complain that I laud communion in both kinds, and are happily engrossed in this most important and worthy matter, I will go yet one step farther and undertake to show that all those who deny communion in both kinds to the laity are wicked men. And the more conveniently to do this, I will compose a prelude on the captivity of the Roman Church. In due time I shall have a great deal more to say, when the learned papists have disposed of this book.

I take this course, lest any pious reader who may chance upon this book, should be offended at my dealing with such filthy matters, and should justly complain of finding in it nothing to cultivate and instruct his mind or even to furnish food for learned thought. For you know how impatient my friends are because I waste my time on the sordid fictions of these men, which, they say, are amply

refuted in the reading; they look for greater things from me, which Satan seeks in this way to hinder. I have at length resolved to follow their counsel and to leave to those hornets the pleasant business of wrangling and hurling invectives.

Of that friar of Cremona I will say nothing. He is an unlearned man and a simpleton, who attempts with a few rhetorical passages to recall me to the Holy See, from which I am not as yet aware of having departed, nor has any one proved it to me. He is chiefly concerned in those silly passages with showing that I ought to be moved by the vow of my order and by the fact that the empire has been transferred to us Germans.[1] He seems thus to have set out to write, not my "revocation," but rather the praises of the French people and the Roman pontiff. Let him attest his loyalty in his little book; it is the best he could do. He does not deserve to be harshly treated, for methinks he was not prompted by malice; nor yet to be learnedly refuted, for all his chatter is sheer ignorance and simplicity.[2]

At the outset I must deny that there are seven sacraments, and hold for the present[3] to but three—baptism, penance and the bread.[4] These three have been subjected to a miserable captivity by the Roman curia, and the Church has been deprived of all her liberty. To be sure, if I desired to use the term in its scriptural sense, I should allow but a single sacrament,[5] with three sacramental signs; but of this I shall treat more fully at the proper time.

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[1] See above, pp. 153 ff.

[2] A less lenient view was taken by Boniface Amerbach, writing to his brother Basil at Basle, October 20, 1520: "The good man (Luther) was not a little injured by the libel of a poor impostor, who, by pretending that Martin had recanted, brought back even those who had entered upon the way of truth to their former errors." See SMITH, op. cit., I, no. 316.

[3] The present did not last very long; see below, p. 292.

[4] So called because of the withholding of the wine from the laity.

[5] Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16. See KÖSTLIN, Theology of Luther (E. Tr.), I, 403; and below, pp. 258 f.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE BREAD

Let me tell you what progress I have made in my studies on the administration of this sacrament. For when I published my treatise on the Eucharist,[1] I clung to the common usage, being in no wise concerned with the question of the right or wrong of the papacy. But now, challenged and attacked, nay, forcibly thrust into the arena, I shall freely speak my mind, let all the papists laugh or weep together.

The First Captivity: the Withholding of the Cup from the Laity

In the first place, John vi is to be entirely excluded from this discussion, since it does not refer in a single syllable to the sacrament. For not only was the sacrament not yet instituted, but the whole context plainly shows that Christ is speaking of faith in the Word made flesh, as I have said above.[2] For He says, "My words are spirit, and they are John 6:63 life," which shows that He is speaking of a spiritual eating, whereby whoever eats has life, whereas the Jews understood Him to be speaking of bodily eating and therefore disputed with Him. But no eating can give life save the eating which is by faith, for that is the truly spiritual and living eating. As Augustine also says: "Why make ready teeth and stomach? Believe, and thou hast eaten."[3] For the sacramental eating does not give life, since many eat unworthily. Therefore, He cannot be understood as speaking of the sacrament in this passage.

These words have indeed been wrongly applied to the sacrament, as in the decretal D u d u m[4] and often elsewhere. But it is one thing to misapply the Scriptures, it is quite another to understand them in their proper meaning. But if Christ in this passage enjoined the sacramental John 6:53 eating, then by saying, "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you," He would condemn all

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[1] The Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament, 1519.
[2] See page 174.
[3] See above, p. 10, note 1.
[4] Decretal. Greg., lib. III, tit. xli, cap. 17.

infants, invalids and those absent or in any wise hindered from the sacramental eating, however strong their faith might be. Thus Augustine, in the second book of his Contra Julianum,[1] proves from Innocent that even infants eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, without the sacrament; that is, they partake of them through the faith of the Church. Let this then be accepted as proved,—John vi does not belong here. For this reason I have elsewhere[2] written that the Bohemians have no right to rely on this passage in support of their use of the sacrament in both kinds.

Now there are two passages that do clearly bear upon this matter—the Gospel narratives of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and Paul in 1 Corinthians xi. These let us examine.

Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that Christ gave the whole sacrament to all the disciples, and it is certain that Paul delivered both kinds. No one has ever had the temerity to assert the contrary. Further, Matthew reports that Christ said not of the bread, "Eat ye all of it," but of the cup, "Drink ye all of it"; and Mark likewise says not, "They all ate of it," but, "They all drank of it." Both Matthew and Mark attach the note of universality to the cup, not to the bread; as though the Spirit saw this schism coming, by which some would be forbidden to partake of the cup, which Christ desired should be common to all. How furiously, think you, would they rave against us, if they had found the word "all" attached to the bread instead of the cup! They would not leave us a loophole to escape, they would cry out upon us and set us down as heretics, they would damn us for schismatics. But now, since it stands on our side and against them, they will not be bound by any force of logic—these men of the most

Matt. 26
Mark 14
Luke 22
1 Cor. 11
Matt. 26:27
Mark 14:23

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[1] Migne, XLIV, 699 f.
[2] Verklärung etlicher Artikel, 1520. Weimar Ed., VI, 80, 11 ff.

free will,[1] who change and change again even the things that be God's, and throw everything into confusion.

But imagine me standing over against them and interrogating my lords the papists. In the Lord's Supper, I say, the whole sacrament, or communion in both kinds, is given only to the priests or else it is given also to the laity. If it is given only to the priests, as they would have it, then it is not right to give it to the laity in either kind; for it must not be rashly given to any to whom Christ did not give it when He instituted it. For if we permit one institution of Christ to be changed, we make all of His laws invalid, and every one will boldly claim that he is not bound by any law or institution of His. For a single exception, especially in the Scriptures, invalidates the whole. But if it is given also to the laity, then it inevitably follows that it ought not to be withheld from them in either form. And if any do withhold it from them when they desire it, they act impiously and contrary to the work, example and institution of Christ.

I confess that I am conquered by this to me unanswerable argument, and that I have neither read nor heard nor found anything to advance against it. For here the word and example of Christ stand firm, when He says, not
Matt. 26:27 by way of permission but of command, "Drink ye all of it." For if all are to drink, and the words cannot be understood as addressed to the priests alone, then it is certainly an impious act to withhold the cup from laymen
Gal. 1:8 who desire it, even though an angel from heaven were to do it. For when they say that the distribution of both kinds was left to the judgment of the Church, they make this assertion without giving any reason for it and put it forth without any authority; it is ignored just as readily as it is proved, and does not hold against an opponent who

[1] An allusion to his opponents' doctrine of the complete freedom of the will, which Luther denied. Compare his De servo arbitrio (1525). Weimar Ed., XVIII, 600 ff. He finds in their treatment of Scripture and of logic a practical expression of this doctrine of theirs.

confronts us[1] with the word and work of Christ. Such an one must be refuted with a word of Christ, but this we[1] do not possess.

But if one kind may be withheld from the laity, then with equal right and reason a portion of baptism and penance might also be taken from them by this same authority of the Church. Therefore, just as baptism and absolution must be administered in their entirety, so the sacrament of the bread must be given in its entirety to all laymen, if they desire it. I am amazed to find them asserting that the priests may never receive only the one kind, in the mass, on pain of committing a mortal sin; and that for no other reason, as they unanimously say, than that both kinds constitute the one complete sacrament, which may not be divided. I pray them to tell me why it may be divided in the case of the laity, and why to them alone the whole sacrament may not be given. Do they not acknowledge, by their own testimony, either that both kinds are to be given to the laity, or that it is not a valid sacrament when only one kind is given to them? How can the one kind be a complete sacrament for the laity and not a complete sacrament for the priests? Why do they flaunt the authority of the Church and the power of the pope in my face? These do not make void the Word of God and the testimony of the truth.

But further, if the Church can withhold the wine from the laity, it can also withhold the bread from them; it could, therefore, withhold the entire sacrament of the altar from the laity and completely annul Christ's institution so far as they are concerned. I ask, by what authority? But if the Church cannot withhold the bread, or both kinds, neither can it withhold the wine. This cannot possibly be gainsaid; for the Church's power must be the same over either kind as over both kinds, and if she has no power over both kinds, she has none over either kind. I am

[1] Luther humbly identifies himself with the erring priesthood.

curious to hear what the Roman sycophants will have to say to this.

What carries most weight with me, however, and quite decides me is this. Christ says: "This is my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." Here we see very plainly that the blood is given to all those for whose sins it was shed. But who will dare to say it was not shed for the laity? Do you not see whom He addresses when He gives the cup? Does He not give it to all? Does He not say that it is shed for all? "For you," He says—well: we will let these be the priests—"and for many"—these cannot be priests; and yet He says, "Drink ye all of it." I too could easily trifle here and with my words make a mockery of Christ's words, as my dear trifler[1] does; but they who rely on the Scriptures in opposing us, must be refuted by the Scriptures. This is what has prevented me from condemning the Bohemians, who, be they wicked men or good, certainly have the word and act of Christ on their side, while we have neither, but only that hollow device of men—"the Church has appointed it." It was not the Church that appointed these things, but the tyrants of the churches, without the consent of the Church, which is the people of God.

Matt. 26:28

Matt. 26:27

But where in all the world is the necessity, where the religious duty, where the practical use, of denying both kinds, i. e., the visible sign, to the laity, when every one concedes to them the grace[2] of the sacrament without the sign? If they concede the grace, which is the greater, why not the sign, which is the lesser? For in every sacrament the sign as such is of far less importance than the thing signified. What then is to prevent them from conceding the lesser, when they concede the greater? I can see but

[1] Alveld.

[2] The res sacramenti. The sacrament consisted of these two parts—(1) the sacramentum, or external sign, and (2) the res sacramenti, or the thing signified, the sacramental grace. Another distinction is that between (1) materia, or the external sign, and (2) forma, or the words of institution or administration. See below, p. 223.

one reason; it has come about by the permission of an angry God in order to give occasion for a schism in the Church, to bring home to us how, having long ago lost the grace of the sacrament, we contend for the sign, which is the lesser, against that which is the most important and the chief thing; just as some men for the sake of ceremonies contend against love. Nay, this monstrous perversion seems to date from the time when we began for the sake of the riches of this world to rage against Christian love. Thus God would show us, by this terrible sign, how we esteem signs more than the things they signify. How preposterous would it be to admit that the faith of baptism is granted the candidate for baptism, and yet to deny him the sign of this faith, namely, the water!

Finally, Paul stands invincible and stops every mouth, when he says in 1 Corinthians xi, "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered unto you." He does not say, "I permitted unto you," as that friar lyingly asserts.[1] Nor is it true that Paul delivered both kinds on account of the contention in the Corinthian congregation. For, first, the text shows that their contention was not about both kinds, but about the contempt and envy among rich and poor, as it is clearly stated: "One is hungry, and another is drunken, and ye put to shame them that have not." Again, Paul is not speaking of the time when he first delivered the sacrament to them, for he says not, "I receive of the Lord and give unto you," but, "I received and delivered" — namely, when he first began to preach among them, a long while before this contention. This shows that he delivered both kinds to them; and "delivered" means the same as "commanded," for elsewhere he uses the word in this sense. Consequently there is nothing in the friar's fuming about permission; it is a hotch-potch without Scripture, reason or sense. His opponents do not ask what he has dreamed, but what the Scriptures decree in this matter; and out of the Scriptures

1 Cor. 11:23

1 Cor. 11:21

[1] Cf. Weimar Ed., VI, 505, note 1.

he cannot adduce one jot or tittle in support of his dreams, while they can bring forward mighty thunderbolts in support of their faith.

Come hither then, ye popish flatterers, one and all! Fall to and defend yourselves against the charge of godlessness, tyranny, lese-majesty against the Gospel, and the crime of slandering your brethren,—ye that decry as heretics those who will not be wise after the vaporings of your own brains, in the face of such patent and potent words of Scripture. If any are to be called heretics and schismatics, it is not the Bohemians nor the Greeks, for they take their stand upon the Gospel; but you Romans are the heretics and godless schismatics, for you presume upon your own fictions and fly in the face of the clear Scriptures of God. Parry that stroke, if you can!

But what could be more ridiculous, and more worthy of this friar's brain, than his saying that the Apostle wrote these words and gave this permission, not to the Church universal, but to a particular church, that is, the Corinthian? Where does he get his proof? Out of his one storehouse, his own impious head. If the Church universal receives, reads and follows this epistle in all points as written for itself, why should it not do the same with this portion of it? If we admit that any epistle, or any part of any epistle, of Paul does not apply to the Church universal, then the whole authority of Paul falls to the ground. Then the Corinthians will say that what he teaches about faith in the epistle to the Romans does not apply to them. What greater blasphemy and madness can be imagined than this! God forbid that there should be one jot or tittle in all of Paul which the whole Church universal is not bound to follow and keep! Not so did the Fathers hold, down to these perilous times, in which Paul foretold there should be blasphemers and blind and insensate men, of whom this friar is one, nay the chief.

2 Tim. 3 : 2

However, suppose we grant the truth of this intolerable madness. If Paul gave his permisson to a particular church,

then, even from your own point of view, the Greeks and Bohemians are in the right, for they are particular churches; hence it is sufficient that they do not act contrary to Paul, who at least gave permission. Moreover, Paul could not permit anything contrary to Christ's institution. Therefore I cast in thy teeth, O Rome, and in the teeth of all thy sycophants, these sayings of Christ and Paul, on behalf of the Greeks and the Bohemians. Nor canst thou prove that thou hast received any authority to change them, much less to accuse others of heresy for disregarding thy arrogance; rather dost thou deserve to be charged with the crime of godlessness and despotism.

Furthermore, Cyprian, who alone is strong enough to hold all the Romanists at bay, bears witness, in the fifth book of his treatise Of the Fallen, that it was a wide-spread custom in his church to administer both kinds to the laity, and even to children,[1] yea to give the body of the Lord into their hands; of which he cites many instances. He inveighs, for example, against certain members of the congregation as follows: "The sacrilegious man is angered at the priests because he does not forthwith receive the body of the Lord with unclean hands, or drink the blood of the Lord with defiled lips." He is speaking, as you see, of laymen, and irreverent laymen, who desired to receive the body and the blood from the priests. Dost thou find anything to snarl at here, thou wretched flatterer? Say that even this holy martyr, a Church Father pre-eminent for his apostolic spirit, was a heretic and used that permission in a particular church.

In the same place, Cyprian narrates an incident that came under his own observation. He describes at length how a deacon was administering the cup to a little girl, who drew away from him, whereupon he poured the blood of the Lord into her mouth. We read the same of St. Donatus, whose broken chalice this wretched flatterer so lightly disposes of. "I read of a broken chalice," he says, "but

[1] Cf. Vol. I, p. 325, and Realencyklopädie, X, 289, pp. 11 ff.

I do not read that the blood was given."[1] It is no wonder! He that finds what he pleases in the Scriptures will also read what he pleases in the histories. But will the authority of the Church be established, or will heretics be refuted, in this way? Enough of this! I did not undertake this work to reply to him who is not worth replying to, but to bring the truth of the matter to light.

I conclude, then, that it is wicked and despotic to deny both kinds to the laity, and that this is not in the power of any angel, much less of any pope or council. Nor does the Council of Constance give me pause, for if its authority carries weight, why does not that of the Council of Basel also carry weight? For the latter council decided, on the contrary, after much disputing, that the Bohemians might use both kinds, as the extant records and documents of the council prove. And to that council this ignorant flatterer refers in support of his dream; in such wisdom does his whole treatise abound.[2]

The first captivity of this sacrament, therefore, concerns its substance or completeness, of which we have been deprived by the despotism of Rome. Not that they sin against Christ, who use the one kind, for Christ did not command the use of either kind, but left it to every one's free will, when He said: "As oft as ye do this, do it in remembrance of me." But they sin who forbid the giving of both kinds to such as desire to exercise this free will. The fault lies not with the laity, but with the priests. The sacrament does not belong to the priests, but to all, and the priests are not lords but ministers, in duty bound to administer both kinds to those who desire them, and as oft as they desire them. If they wrest this right from the laity and forcibly withhold it, they are tyrants; but the laity are without fault, whether they lack one kind or both kinds; they must meanwhile be sustained by their faith

1 Cor. 11 : 25

[1] Cf. Weimar Ed., VI, 506, note 2.

[2] Cf. W. Köhler, Luther und die Kirchengeschichte (Erlangen, 1900), chap. viii.

and by their desire for the complete sacrament. Just as the priests, being ministers, are bound to administer baptism and absolution to whoever seeks them, because he has a right to them; but if they do not administer them, he that seeks them has at least the full merit of his faith, while they will be accused before Christ as wicked servants. In like manner the holy Fathers of old who dwelt in the desert did not receive the sacrament in any form for many years together.[1]

Therefore I do not urge that both kinds be seized by force, as though we were bound to this form by a rigorous command; but I instruct men's consciences that they may endure the Roman tyranny, well knowing they have been deprived of their rightful share in the sacrament because of their own sin. This only do I desire,—that no one justify the tyranny of Rome, as though it did well to forbid one of the two kinds to the laity; we ought rather to abhor it, withhold our consent, and endure it just as we should do if we were held captive by the Turk and not permitted to use either kind. That is what I meant by saying[2] it seemed well to me that this captivity should be ended by the decree of a general council, our Christian liberty restored to us out of the hands of the Roman tyrant, and every one left free to seek and receive this sacrament, just as he is free to receive baptism and penance. But now they compel us, by the same tyranny, to receive the one kind year after year; so utterly lost is the liberty which Christ has given us. This is but the due reward of our godless ingratitude.

The Second Captivity: Transubstantiation

The second captivity of this sacrament is less grievous so far as the conscience is concerned, yet the very gravest danger threatens the man who would attack it, to say nothing of condemning it. Here I shall be called a Wyclifite[3]

[1] On the spiritual reception of the sacrament see H. Hering, Die Mystik Luthers (1879), pp. 173 f. Cf. above, p. 40.

[2] See above, p. 172.

[3] John Wyclif (†1384), the keenest of the mediæval critics of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

and a heretic a thousand times over. But what of that? Since the Roman bishop has ceased to be a bishop and become a tyrant, I fear none of his decrees, for I know that it is not in his power, nor even in that of a general council, to make new articles of faith.

Years ago, when I was delving into scholastic theology, the Cardinal of Cambray[1] gave me food for thought, in his comments on the fourth book of the Sentences,[2] where he argues with great acumen that to hold that real bread and real wine, and not their accidents only,[3] are present on the altar, is much more probable and requires fewer unnecessary miracles—if only the Church had not decreed otherwise. When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this—namely, the Church of Thomas,[4] i. e., of Aristotle—I waxed bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, at last found rest for my conscience in the above view—namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and blood are present, not otherwise and not less really than they assume to be the case under their accidents. I reached this conclusion because I saw that the opinions of the Thomists, though approved by pope and council, remain but opinions and do not become
Gal. 1 : 8 articles of faith, even though an angel from heaven were to decree otherwise. For what is asserted without Scripture or an approved revelation, may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed. But this opinion of Thomas hangs so completely in the air, devoid of Scripture and reason, that he seems here to have forgotten both his philosophy and his logic. For Aristotle treats so very differently from St. Thomas of subject and accidents, that methinks this great man is to be pitied, not only for drawing his

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[1] Pierre d'Ailly (†1425), who, with his master Occam, greatly influenced Luther.
[2] The Sentences of Peter Lombard, the text-book of mediæval theology.
[3] In the dogma of transubstantiation (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215) the Church taught that the substance of bread and wine was changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood, while the accidents of the former—i. e., their attributes, such as form, color, taste, etc.—remained.
[4] Aquinas.

opinions in matters of faith from Aristotle, but for attempting to base them on him without understanding his meaning—an unfortunate superstructure upon an unfortunate foundation.

I therefore permit every man to hold either of these views, as he chooses. My one concern at present is to remove all scruples of conscience, so that no one may fear to become guilty of heresy if he should believe in the presence of real bread and real wine on the altar, and that every one may feel at liberty to ponder, hold and believe either one view or the other, without endangering his salvation. However, I shall now more fully set forth my own view.

In the first place, I do not intend to listen or attach the least importance to those who will cry out that this teaching of mine is Wyclifite, Hussite, heretical, and contrary to the decision of the Church, for they are the very persons whom I have convicted of manifold heresies in the matter of indulgences, the freedom of the will and the grace of God, good works and sin, etc. If Wyclif was once a heretic, they are heretics ten times over, and it is a pleasure to be suspected and accused by such heretics and perverse sophists, whom to please were the height of godlessness. Besides, the only way in which they can prove their opinions and disprove those of others, is by saying, "That is Wyclifite, Hussite, heretical!" They have this feeble retort always on their tongue, and they have nothing else. If you demand a Scripture passage, they say, "This is our opinion, and the decision of the Church—that is, of ourselves!" Thus these men, "reprobate concerning the faith" and untrustworthy, have the effrontery to set their own fancies before us in the name of the Church as articles of faith. 2 Tim. 3 : 8

But there are good grounds for my view, and this above all,—no violence is to be done to the words of God, whether by man or angel; but they are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in

their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids; lest we give our adversaries occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures. Thus Origen was repudiated, in olden times, because he despised the grammatical sense and turned the trees, and all things else written concerning Paradise, into allegories; for it might therefrom be concluded that God did not create trees. Even so here, when the Evangelists plainly write that Christ took bread and brake it, and the book of Acts and Paul, in their turn, call it bread, we have to think of real bread, and real wine, just as we do of a real cup; for even they do not maintain that the cup is transubstantiated. But since it is not necessary to assume a transubstantiation wrought by Divine power, it is to be regarded as a figment of the human mind, for it rests neither on Scripture nor on reason, as we shall see.

Matt. 26 : 26
Mark 14 : 22
Luke 22 : 19
Acts 2:46
1 Cor. 11 : 23

Therefore it is an absurd and unheard-of juggling with words, to understand "bread" to mean "the form, or accidents of bread," and "wine" to mean "the form, or accidents of wine." Why do they not also understand all other things to mean their forms, or accidents? And even if this might be done with all other things, it would yet not be right thus to emasculate the words of God and arbitrarily to empty them of their meaning.

Moreover, the Church had the true faith for more than twelve hundred years, during which time the holy Fathers never once mentioned this transubstantiation—forsooth, a monstrous word for a monstrous idea!—until the pseudo-philosophy of Aristotle became rampant in the Church, these last three hundred years, during which many other things have been wrongly defined; as for example, that the Divine essence neither is begotten nor begets; that the soul is the substantial form of the human body, and the like assertions, which are made without reason or sense, as the Cardinal of Cambray himself admits.

Perhaps they will say that the danger of idolatry demands that bread and wine be not really present. How

ridiculous! The laymen have never become familiar with their fine-spun philosophy of substance and accidents, and could not grasp it if it were taught them. Besides, there is the same danger in the case of the accidents which remain and which they see, as in the case of the substance which they do not see. For if they do not adore the accidents, but Christ hidden under them, why should they adore the bread, which they do not see?

But why could not Christ include His body in the substance of the bread just as well as in the accidents? The two substances of fire and iron are so mingled in the heated iron that every part is both iron and fire. Why could not much rather Christ's body be thus contained in every part of the substance of the bread?

What will they say? We believe that in His birth Christ came forth out of the unopened womb of His mother. Let them say here too that the flesh of the Virgin was meanwhile annihilated, or as they would more aptly say, transubstantiated, so that Christ, after being enfolded in its accidents, finally came forth through the accidents! The same thing will have to be said of the shut door and of the closed mouth of the sepulchre, through which He went in and out without disturbing them. Hence has risen that hotch-potch of a philosophy of constant quantity distinct from the substance, until it has come to such a pass that they themselves no longer know what are accidents and what is substance. For who has ever proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that heat, color, cold, light, weight or shape are mere accidents? Finally, they have been driven to the fancy that a new substance is created by God for their accidents on the altar—all on account of Aristotle, who says, "It is the essence of an accident to be in something," and endless other monstrosities, of all which they would be rid if they simply permitted real bread to be present. And I rejoice greatly that the simple faith of this sacrament is still to be found at least among the common people; for as they do not understand, neither

do they dispute, whether accidents are present or substance,[1] but believe with a simple faith that Christ's body and blood are truly contained in whatever is there, and leave to those who have nothing else to do the business of disputing about that which contains them.

But perhaps they will say: From Aristotle we learn that in an affirmative proposition subject and predicate must be identical, or, to set down the beast's own words, in the sixth book of his Metaphysics: "An affirmative proposition demands the agreement of subject and predicate," which they interpret as above. Hence, when it is said, "This is my body," the subject cannot be identical with the bread, but must be identical with the body of Christ. What shall we say when Aristotle and the doctrines of men are made to be the arbiters of these lofty and divine matters? Why do we not put by such curiosity, and cling simply to the word of Christ, willing to remain in ignorance of what here takes place, and content with this, that the real body of Christ is present by virtue of the words?[2] Or is it necessary to comprehend the manner of the divine working in every detail?

But what do they say to Aristotle's assigning a subject to whatever is predicated of the attributes, although he holds that the substance is the chief subject? Hence for him, "this white," "this large," etc., are subjects of which something is predicated. If that is correct, I ask: If a transubstantiation must be assumed in order that Christ's body be not predicated of the bread, why not also a transaccidentation in order that it be not predicated of the accidents? For the same danger remains if one understands the subject to be "this white" or "this round"[3] is my body, and for the same reason that a transubstantiation is assumed, a transaccidentation must also be assumed, because of this identity of subject and predicate.

[1] Thus the Erlangen Ed.; the Weimar Ed. reads: an accidentia ibi sint sine substantia.

[2] See above, p. 20.

[3] i. e., the host, or wafer.

Let us not, however, dabble too much in philosophy. Does not Christ appear to have admirably anticipated such curiosity by saying of the wine, not, "Hoc est sanguis meus," but "Hic est sanguis meus"? And yet more clearly, by bringing in the word "cup," when He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." Does it not seem as though He desired to keep us in a simple faith, so that we might but believe His blood to be in the cup? For my part, if I cannot fathom how the bread is the body of Christ, I will take my reason captive to the obedience of Christ, and clinging simply to His word, firmly believe not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the body of Christ. For in this I am borne out by the words, "He took bread, and giving thanks, He brake it and said, Take, eat; this [i. e., this bread which He took and brake] is my body." And Paul says: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" He says not, in the bread, but the bread itself, is the communion of the body of Christ. What matters it if philosophy cannot fathom this? The Holy Spirit is greater than Aristotle. Does philosophy fathom that transubstantiation of theirs, of which they themselves admit that here all philosophy breaks down? But the agreement of the pronoun "this" with "body," in Greek and Latin, is owing to the fact that in these languages the two words are of the same gender. But in the Hebrew language, which has no neuter gender, "this" agrees with "bread," so that it would be proper to say, "Hic est corpus meum." This is proved also by the use of language and by common sense; the subject, forsooth, points to the bread, not to the body, when He says, "Hoc est corpus meum," "Das ist mein Leib,"—i. e., This bread is my body.

Matt. 26 : 28

1 Cor. 11 : 25

2 Cor. 10 : 5

1 Cor. 11 : 23

1 Cor. 10 : 16

Therefore it is with the sacrament even as it is with Christ. In order that the Godhead may dwell in Him, it is not necessary that the human nature be transubstantiated and the Godhead be contained under its accidents; but both natures are there in their entirety, and it is truly

said, "This man is God," and "This God is man." Even though philosophy cannot grasp this, faith grasps it, and the authority of God's Word is greater than the grasp of our intellect. Even so, in order that the real body and the real blood of Christ may be present in the sacrament, it is not necessary that the bread and wine be transubstantiated and Christ be contained under their accidents; but both remain there together, and it is truly said, "This bread is my body, this wine is my blood," and vice versa. Thus I will for the nonce understand it, for the honor of the holy words of God, which I will not suffer any petty human arguments to override or wrest to meanings foreign to them. At the same time, I permit other men to follow the other opinion, which is laid down in the decree Firmiter[1]; only let them not press us to accept their opinions as articles of faith, as I said above.

Matt. 26:26

The Third Captivity: The Mass a Good Work and a Sacrifice

The third captivity of this sacrament is that most wicked abuse of all, in consequence of which there is to-day no more generally accepted and firmly believed opinion in the Church than this,—that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice. And this abuse has brought an endless host of others in its train, so that the faith of this sacrament has become utterly extinct and the holy sacrament has been turned into a veritable fair, tavern, and place of merchandise. Hence participations,[2] brotherhoods,[3] intercessions, merits, anniversaries, memorial days, and the like wares are bought and sold, traded and bartered in the Church, and from this priests and monks derive their whole living.

I am attacking a difficult matter, and one perhaps impossible to abate, since it has become so firmly entrenched through century-long custom and the common consent of men that it would be necessary to abolish most of the books now in vogue, to alter well-nigh the whole external form of

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[1] Decretal. Greg. lib. I, tit. i, cap. 1, § 3.
[2] See above, pp. 26 ff.
[3] See above, p. 137.

the churches, and to introduce, or rather re-introduce, a totally different kind of ceremonies. But my Christ lives; and we must be careful to give more heed to the Word of God than to all the thoughts of men and of angels. I will perform the duties of my office, and uncover the facts in the case; I will give the truth as I have received it, freely and without malice. For the rest let every man look to his own salvation; I will faithfully do my part that none may cast on me the blame for his lack of faith and knowledge of the truth, when we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Matt. 10:8

The Word of Christ, which is the Testament

In the first place, in order to attain safely and fortunately to a true and unbiased knowledge of this sacrament, we must above all else be careful to put aside whatever has been added by the zeal and devotion of men to the original, simple institution of this sacrament,—such things as vestments, ornaments, chants, prayers, organs, candles, and the whole pageantry of outward things;[1] we must turn our eyes and hearts simply to the institution of Christ and to this alone, and set naught before us but the very word of Christ by which He instituted this sacrament, made it perfect, and committed it to us. For in that word, and in that word alone, reside the power, the nature, and the whole substance of the mass. All else is the work of man, added to the word of Christ; and the mass can be held and remain a mass just as well without it. Now the words of Christ, in which He instituted this sacrament, are these:

Matt. 26:26 ff. 1 Cor. 11:24 f. Luke 22:20

"And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye and eat. This is my body, which shall be given for you. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you and for many unto remission of sins. This do for the commemoration of me."[2]

[1] Comp. Vol. I, pp. 295 ff.

[2] The Douay Version has here been followed.

These words the Apostle also delivers and more fully
1 Cor. 11:23 ff. Eph. 4:14 expounds in 1 Cor. xi. On them we must lean and build as on a firm foundation, if we would not be carried about with every wind of doctrine, even as we have hitherto been
Titus 1:14 carried about by the wicked doctrines of men, who turn aside the truth. For in these words nothing is omitted that pertains to the completeness, the use and the blessing of this sacrament; and nothing is included that is superfluous and not necessary for us to know. Whoever sets them aside and meditates or teaches concerning the mass, will teach monstrous and wicked doctrines, as they have done who made of the sacrament an opus operatum[1] and a sacrifice.

Therefore let this stand at the outset as our infallibly certain proposition,—the mass, or sacrament of the altar, is Christ's testament which He left behind Him at His death, to be distributed among His believers. For that is
Luke 22:20 the meaning of His word,—"This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood." Let this truth stand, I say, as the immovable foundation on which we shall base all that we have to say, for we are going to overthrow, as you will see, all the godless opinions of men imported into this most precious sacrament. Christ, Who is the Truth, saith truly that this is the new testament in His blood, which is shed for us. Not without reason do I dwell on this sentence; the matter is of no small moment, and must be most deeply impressed upon us.

Let us enquire, therefore, what a testament is, and we shall learn at the same time what the mass is, what its use and blessing, and what its abuse. A testament, as every one knows, is a promise made by one about to die, in which he designates his bequest and appoints his heirs. Therefore a testament involves, first, the death of the testator, and secondly, the promise of the bequest and the naming of the heir. Thus St. Paul discusses at length the nature of a

[1] See Luther's own definition above, pp. 22 f.

testament in Romans iv, Galatians iii and iv, and Hebrews ix. The same thing is also clearly seen in these words of Christ. Christ testifies concerning His death when He says: "This is my body, which shall be given; this is my blood, which shall be shed." He designates the bequest when He says: "Unto remission of sins." And He appoints the heirs when He says: "For you, and for many"—i. e., for such as accept and believe the promise of the testator; for here it is faith that makes men heirs, as we shall see.

Rom. 4 Gal. 3, 4 Heb. 9

Luke 22:19 f.

You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is the promise of remission of sins made to us by God; and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the one difference between a promise and a testament is that a testament is a promise which implies the death of him who makes it. A testator is a man making a promise who is about to die; whilst he that makes a promise is, if I may so put it, a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ was forshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; nay, whatever value those olden promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words "covenant" and "testament of the Lord" occur so frequently in the Scriptures, which words signified that God would one day die. For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must needs follow (Hebrews ix). Now God made a testament: therefore it was necessary that He should die. But God could not die unless He became man. Thus both the incarnation and the death of Christ are briefly comprehended in this one word "testament."

Heb. 9:16

From the above it will at once be seen what is the right and what the wrong use of the mass, what is the worthy and what the unworthy preparation for it. If the mass is a promise, as has been said, it is to be approached, not with any work or strength or merit, but with faith alone. For where there is the word of God Who makes the promise, there must be the faith of man who takes it. It is plain,

therefore, that the first step in our salvation is faith, which clings to the word of the promise made by God, Who without any effort on our part, in free and unmerited mercy makes a beginning and offers us the word of His promise.

Ps. 107:20 For He sent His Word, and by it healed them. He did not accept our work and thus heal us. God's Word is the beginning of all; on it follows faith, and on faith charity;

Rom. 13:10 then charity works every good work, for it worketh no ill, nay, it is the fulfilling of the law. In no other way can man come to God and deal with Him than through faith; that is, not man, by any work of his, but God, by His promise, is the author of salvation, so that all things depend on the

Heb. 1:3 word of His power, and are upheld and preserved by it,

Jas. 1:18 with which word He begat us, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Thus, in order to raise up Adam after the fall, God gave

Gen. 3:15 him this promise, addressing the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." In this word of promise Adam, with them that were his, was carried as it were in God's bosom, and by faith in it he was preserved, patiently waiting for the woman who should crush the serpent's head, as God had promised. And in that faith and expectation he died, not knowing when or in what guise she would come, yet never doubting that she would come. For such a promise, being the truth of God, preserves, even in hell, those who

Gen. 9:12 believe it and wait for it. After this came another promise, made to Noah—to last until the time of Abraham—when a bow was set as a sign in the clouds, by faith in which Noah

Gen. 12:3 and his descendants found a gracious God. After that He promised Abraham that all nations should be blessed in

Luke 16:22 his seed; and this is Abraham's bosom, into which his

Deut. 18:18 posterity was carried. Then to Moses and the children of Israel, and especially to David, He gave the plain promise

2 Sam. 7:16 of Christ, thereby at last making clear what was meant by the promise to them of old time. And so it came finally to

the most complete promise of the new testament, in which with plain words life and salvation are freely promised, and granted to such as believe the promise. And He distinguished this testament by a particular mark from the old, calling it the "new testament." For the old testament, which He gave by Moses, was a promise not of remission of sins or of eternal things, but of temporal,—namely, the land of Canaan,—by which no man was renewed in his spirit, to lay hold on the heavenly inheritance. Therefore it was also necessary that dumb beasts should be slain, as types of Christ, that by their blood the testament might be confirmed; so that the testament was even as the blood, and the promise even as the sacrifice. But here He says: "The new testament in my blood"—not in another's, but in His own, and by this blood grace is promised, through the Spirit, unto the remission of sins, that we may obtain the inheritance.

Luke 22:20

Luke 22:20

The mass, according to its substance, is, therefore, nothing else than the aforesaid words of Christ—"Take and eat"; as if He said: "Behold, O sinful man and condemned, out of pure and unmerited love wherewith I love thee, and by the will of the Father of all mercies, I promise thee in these words, or ever thou canst desire or deserve them, the forgiveness of all thy sins and life everlasting. And, that thou mayest be most certainly assured of this my irrevocable promise, I give my body and shed my blood, thus by my very death confirming this promise, and leaving thee my body and blood as a sign and memorial of this same promise. As oft, therefore, as thou partakest of them, remember me, and praise, magnify, and give thanks for my love and largess toward thee."

1 Cor. 11:24

Herefrom you will see that nothing else is needed for a worthy holding of mass than a faith that confidently relies on this promise, believes Christ to be true in these words of His, and doubts not that these infinite blessings have been bestowed upon it. Hard on this faith there follows, of itself, a most sweet stirring of the heart, whereby the spirit

of man is enlarged and waxes fat—that is love, given by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ—so that he is drawn unto Christ, that gracious and good Testator, and made quite another and a new man. Who would not shed tears of gladness, nay well-nigh faint for the joy he hath toward Christ, if he believed with unshaken faith that this inestimable promise of Christ belonged to him! How could one help loving so great a Benefactor, who offers, promises and grants, all unbidden, such great riches, and this eternal inheritance, to one unworthy and deserving of somewhat far different?

Therefore, it is our one misfortune, that we have many masses in the world, and yet none or but the fewest of us recognize, consider and receive these promises and riches that are offered, although verily we should do nothing else in the mass with greater zeal (yea, it demands all our zeal) than set before our eyes, meditate, and ponder these words, these promises of Christ, which truly are the mass itself, in order to exercise, nourish, increase, and strengthen our faith by such daily remembrance. For this is what He commands, saying, "This do in remembrance of me."

1 Cor. 11:24

This should be done by the preachers of the Gospel, in order that this promise might be faithfully impressed upon the people and commended to them, to the awakening of faith in the same. But how many are there now who know that the mass is the promise of Christ? I will say nothing of those godless preachers of fables, who teach human traditions instead of this promise. And even if they teach these words of Christ, they do not teach them as a promise or testament, and, therefore, not to the awakening of faith.

O the pity of it! Under this captivity, they take every precaution that no layman should hear these words of Christ, as if they were too sacred to be delivered to the common people. So mad are we[1] priests that we arrogantly claim that the so-called words of consecration may be said by ourselves alone, as secret words, yet so that they do not

[1] See above, p. 181, note.

profit even us, for we too fail to regard them as promises or as a testament, for the strengthening of faith. Instead of believing them, we reverence them with I know not what superstitious and godless fancies. This misery of ours, what is it but a device of Satan to remove every trace of the mass out of the Church? although he is meanwhile at work filling every nook and corner on earth with masses, that is, abuses and mockeries of God's testament, and burdening the world more and more heavily with grievous sins of idolatry, to its deeper condemnation. For what worse idolatry can there be than to abuse God's promises with perverse opinions and to neglect or extinguish faith in them?

For God does not deal, nor has He ever dealt, with man otherwise than through a word of promise, as I have said;[1] again, we cannot deal with God otherwise than through faith in the word of His promise. He does not desire works, nor has He need of them; we deal with men and with ourselves on the basis of works. But He has need of this,—that we deem Him true to His promises, wait patiently for Him, and thus worship Him with faith, hope and love. Thus Ps. 115:1 He obtains His glory among us, since it is not of ourselves Rom. who run, but of Him who showeth mercy, promiseth and 9:16 giveth, that we have and hold every blessing. That is the true worship and service of God which we must perform in the mass. But if the words of promise are not proclaimed, what exercise of faith can there be? And without faith, who can have hope or love? Without faith, hope and love, what service can there be? There is no doubt, therefore, that in our day all priests and monks, together with all their bishops and superiors, are idolaters and in a most perilous state, by reason of this ignorance, abuse and mockery of the mass, or sacrament, or testament of God.

For any one can easily see that these two—the promise and faith—must go together. For without the promise there is nothing to believe, while without faith the promise

[1] See above, p. 198.

remains without effect; for it is established and fulfilled through faith. From this every one will readily gather that the mass, which is nothing else than the promise, is approached and observed only in this faith, without which whatever prayers, preparations, works, signs of the cross, or genuflections are brought to it, are incitements to impiety rather than exercises of piety; for they who come thus prepared are wont to imagine themselves on that account justly entitled to approach the altar, when in reality they are less prepared than at any other time and in any other work, by reason of the unbelief which they bring with them. How many priests will you find every day offering the sacrifice of the mass, who accuse themselves of a horrible crime if they—wretched men!—commit a trifling blunder, such as putting on the wrong robe or forgetting to wash their hands or stumbling over their prayers; but that they neither regard nor believe the mass itself, namely, the divine promise—this causes them not the slightest qualms of conscience. O worthless religion of this our age, the most godless and thankless of all ages!

Hence the only worthy preparation and proper use of the mass is faith in the mass, that is to say, in the divine promise. Whoever, therefore, is minded to approach the altar and to receive the sacrament, let him beware of appearing empty before the Lord God. But he will appear empty unless he has faith in the mass, or this new testament. What godless work that he could commit would be a more grievous crime against the truth of God, than this unbelief of his, by which, as much as in him lies, he convicts God of being a liar and a maker of empty promises? The safest course, therefore, will be to go to mass in the same spirit in which you would go to hear any other promise of God; that is, not to be ready to perform and bring many works, but to believe and receive all that is there promised, or proclaimed by the priest as having been promised to you. If you do not go in this spirit, beware of going at all; you will surely go to your condemnation.

Ex. 23:15; 34:20 Deut. 16:16

I was right then in saying[1] that the whole power of the mass consists in the words of Christ, in which He testifies that the remission of sins is bestowed on all those who believe that His body is given and His blood shed for them. For this reason nothing is more important for those who go to hear mass than diligently and in full faith to ponder these words. Unless they do this, all else that they do is in vain.

The External Sign, which is the Sacrament

But while the mass is the word of Christ, it is also true that God is wont to add to well-nigh every promise of His a certain sign as a mark or memorial of His promise, so that we may thereby the more faithfully hold to His promise and be the more forcibly admonished by it. Thus, to his promise to Noah that He would not again destroy the world by a flood, He added His bow in the clouds, to show that He would be mindful of His covenant. And after promising Abraham the inheritance in his seed, He gave him the sign of circumcision as the seal of his righteousness by faith. Thus, to Gideon He granted the sign of the dry and the wet fleece, to confirm His promise of victory over the Midianites. And to Ahaz He offered a sign through Isaiah concerning his victory over the kings of Syria and Samaria, to strengthen his faith in the promise. And many such signs of the promises of God do we find in the Scriptures.

Gen. 9:13

Gen. 17:10 ff.

Judges 6:36 ff.

Isa. 7:10 ff.

Thus also to the mass, that crown of all His promises, He adds His body and blood in the bread and wine, as a memorial sign of this great promise; as He says, "This do in remembrance of me." Even so in baptism He adds to the words of the promise, the sign of immersion in water. We learn from this that in every promise of God two things are presented to us—the word and the sign—so that we are to understand the word to be the testament, but the sign to be the sacrament. Thus, in the mass, the word of Christ is the testament, and the bread and wine are the sacrament. And as there is greater power in the word than in the sign, so there is greater power in the testament than

1 Cor. 11:24

[1] See above, p. 195.

in the sacrament; for a man can have and use the word, or testament, apart from the sign, or sacrament. "Believe," says Augustine, "and thou hast eaten."[1] But what does one believe save the word of promise? Therefore I can hold mass every day, yea, every hour, for I can set the words of Christ before me, and with them refresh and strengthen my faith, as often as I choose. That is a truly spiritual eating and drinking.[2]

Here you may see what great things our theologians of the Sentences[3] have produced. That which is the principal and chief thing, namely, the testament and word of promise, is not treated by one of them; thus they have obliterated faith and the whole power of the mass. But the second part of the mass,—the sign, or sacrament,[4]—this alone do they discuss, yet in such a manner that here too they teach not faith but their preparations and opera operata, participations and fruits,[5] as though these were the mass, until they have fallen to babbling of transubstantiation and endless other metaphysical quibbles, and have destroyed the proper understanding and use of both sacrament and testament, altogether abolished faith, and caused Christ's
Jer. 2:32 people to forget their God, as the prophet says, days without number. But do you let the others tell over the manifold fruits of hearing mass, and turn hither your mind, and
Ps. 23:5 say and believe with the prophet, that God here prepares a table before you, against all those that afflict you, at which your soul may eat and grow fat. But your faith is fed only
Deut. 8:3 with the word of divine promise, for "not in bread alone
Matt. 4:4 doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Hence, in the mass you must above all things pay closest heed to the word of promise, as to your rich banquet, green pasture, and sacred refreshment; you must esteem this word higher than all else, trust in it above

[1] See above, p. 10.
[2] See above, p. 187, note 1.
[3] See above, p. 188.
[4] See above, p. 182, note 2.
[5] On "fruits of the mass" compare Seeberg, Dogmengesch., III, p. 472.

all things, and cling firmly to it even through the midst of death and all sins. By thus doing you will attain not merely to those tiny drops and crumbs of "fruits of the mass," which some have superstitiously imagined, but to the very fountainhead of life, which is faith in the word, from which every blessing flows; as it is said in John iv: "He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"; and again: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, it shall become in him a fountain of living water, springing up into life everlasting."[1] John 7:38 John 4:14

Now there are two things that commonly tempt us to lose the fruits of the mass: first, the fact that we are sinners and unworthy of such great things because of our exceeding vileness; and, secondly, the fact that, even if we were worthy, these things are so high that our faint-hearted nature dare not aspire to them or ever hope to attain to them. For to have God for our Father, to be His sons and heirs of all His goods—these are the great blessings that come to us through the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. And who that regarded them aright must not rather stand aghast before them than desire to possess them? Against this twofold faintness of ours we must lay hold on the word of Christ and fix our gaze on it much more firmly than on those thoughts of our weakness. For "great are the works of the Lord; wrought out according to all His wills, who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." If they did not surpass our worthiness, our grasp and all our thoughts, they would not be divine. Thus Christ also encourages us when He says: "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom." For it is just this overflowing goodness of the incomprehensible God, lavished upon us through Christ, that moves us to love Him again with our whole heart above all things, to be drawn to Him with all confidence, to despise all things else, and be ready to suffer all things for Ps. 111:2 Eph. 3:20 Luke 12:32

[1] Comp. Vol. I, p. 307.

Him; wherefore this sacrament is well styled "a fount of love."

Let us take an illustration of this from every day life.[1] If a thousand g u l d e n were bequeathed by a rich lord to a beggar or an unworthy and wicked servant, it is certain that he would boldly claim and take them regardless of his unworthiness and the greatness of the bequest. And if any one should seek to oppose him by casting in his teeth his unworthiness and the large amount of the legacy, what do you suppose he would say? He would say, forsooth: "What is that to you? What I accept, I accept not on my merits or by any right that I may personally have to it; I know that I am unworthy and receive more than I have deserved, nay, I have deserved the very opposite. But I claim it because it is so written in the will, and on the score of another's goodness. If it was not an unworthy thing for him to bequeath so great a sum to an unworthy person, why should I refuse to accept it because of my unworthiness? Nay, the more unworthy I am, the more reason have I to accept this other man's gracious gift." With such thoughts we need to fortify the consciences of men against all qualms and scruples, that they may lay hold on the promise of Christ with unwavering faith, and take the greatest care to approach the sacrament, not trusting in their confession, prayer and preparation, but rather despairing of these and with a proud confidence in Christ Who gives the promise. For, as we have said again and again, the word of promise must here reign supreme in a pure and unalloyed faith, and such faith is the one and all-sufficient preparation.

The Mass Converted into a Good Work

Hence we see how angry God is with us, in that he has permitted godless teachers to conceal the words of this testament from us, and thereby, as much as in them lay, to extinguish faith. And the inevitable result of this extinguishing of faith is even now plainly to be seen—namely, the most godless superstition of works. For when faith dies and

[1] Comp. Vol. I, pp. 302 f.

the word of faith is silent, works and the traditions of works immediately crowd into their place. By them we have been carried away out of our own land, as in a Babylonian captivity, and despoiled of all our precious possessions. This has been the fate of the mass; it has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work, which they themselves call an opus operatum[1] and by which they presumptuously imagine themselves all-powerful with God. Thereupon they proceeded to the very height of madness, and having invented the lie that the mass works ex opere operato,[2] they asserted further that it is none the less profitable to others, even if it be harmful to the wicked priest celebrating it. On such a foundation of sand they base their applications, participations, sodalities, anniversaries and numberless other money-making schemes.

These lures are so powerful, widespread and firmly entrenched that you will scarcely be able to prevail against them unless you keep before you with unremitting care the real meaning of the mass, and bear well in mind what has been said above. We have seen that the mass is nothing else than the divine promise or testament of Christ, sealed with the sacrament of His body and blood. If that is true, you will understand that it cannot possibly be a work, and that there is nothing to do in it, nor can it be dealt with in any other way than by faith alone. And faith is not a work, but the mistress and the life of all works.[3] Where in all the world is there a man so foolish as to regard a promise made to him, or a testament given to him, as a good work which by his acceptance of it he renders to the testator? What heir will imagine he is doing his departed father a kindness by accepting the terms of the will and the inheritance bequeathed to him? What godless audacity is it, therefore, when we who are to receive the testament of God

[1] See above, pp. 22 f.
[2] See p. 23.
[3] See Vol. I, pp. 187 ff.

come as those who would perform a good work for Him! This ignorance of the testament, this captivity of the sacrament—are they not too sad for tears? When we ought to be grateful for benefits received, we come in our pride to give that which we ought to take, mocking with unheard-of perversity the mercy of the Giver by giving as a work the thing we receive as a gift; so that the testator, instead of being the dispenser of His own goods, becomes the recipient of ours. Out upon such godless doings!

Who has ever been so mad as to regard baptism as a good work, or to believe that by being baptised he was performing a work which he might offer to God for himself and communicate to others? If, therefore, there is no good work that can be communicated to others in this one sacrament or testament, neither will there be any in the mass, since it too is nothing else than a testament and sacrament. Hence it is a manifest and wicked error to offer or apply masses for sins, for satisfactions, for the dead, or for any necessity whatsoever of one's own or of others. You will readily see the obvious truth of this if you but hold firmly that the mass is a divine promise, which can profit no one, be applied to no one, intercede for no one, and be communicated to no one, save him alone who believes with a faith of his own. Who can receive or apply, in behalf of another, the promise of God, which demands the personal faith of every individual? Can I give to another what God has promised, even if he does not believe? Can I believe for another, or cause another to believe? But this is what I must do if I am able to apply and communicate the mass to others; for there are but two things in the mass—the promise of God, and the faith of man which takes that which the promise offers. But if it is true that I can do this, then I can also hear and believe the Gospel for others, I can be baptised for another, I can be absolved from sins for another, I can also partake of the sacrament of the altar for another, and—to run the gamut of their sacraments also—I can marry a wife for another, be ordained for

another, receive confirmation and extreme unction for another! In fine, why did not Abraham believe for all the Jews? Why was faith in the promise made to Abraham demanded of every individual Jew?

Therefore, let this irrefutable truth stand fast. Where there is a divine promise every one must stand upon his own feet, every one's personal faith is demanded, every one will give an account for himself and will bear his own burden, as it is said in the last chapter of Mark: "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Even so every one may derive a blessing from the mass for himself alone and only by his own faith, and no one can commune for any other; just as the priest cannot administer the sacrament to any one in another's stead, but administers the same sacrament to each individual by himself. For in consecrating and administering, the priests are our ministers, through whom we do not offer a good work or commune (in the active), but receive the promises and the sign and are communed (in the passive). That has remained to this day the custom among the laity, for they are not said to do good, but to receive it. But the priests have departed into godless ways; out of the sacrament and testament of God, the source of blessings to be received, they have made a good work which they may communicate and offer to others.

Gal. 6:5

Mark 16.16

But you will say: How is this? Will you not overturn the practice and teaching of all the churches and monasteries, by virtue of which they have flourished these many centuries? For the mass is the foundation of their anniversaries, intercessions, applications, communications, etc. —that is to say, of their fat income. I answer: This is the very thing that has constrained me to write of the captivity of the Church, for in this manner the adorable testament of God has been subjected to the bondage of a godless traffic, through the opinions and traditions of wicked men, who, passing over the Word of God, have put forth the thoughts of their own hearts and misled the whole world.

What do I care for the number and influence of those who are in this error? The truth is mightier than they all. If you are able to gainsay Christ, according to Whom the mass is a testament and sacrament, then I will admit that they are in the right. Or if you can bring yourself to say that that man is doing a good work, who receives the benefit of the testament, or who uses this sacrament of promise in order to receive it, then I will gladly condemn my teachings. But since you can do neither, why do you hesitate to turn your back on the multitude who go after evil, and to give God the glory and confess His truth? Which is, indeed, that all priests today are perversely mistaken, who regard the mass as a work whereby they may relieve their own necessities and those of others, dead or alive. I am uttering unheard-of and startling things; but if you will consider the meaning of the mass, you will realize that I have spoken the truth. The fault lies with our utter supineness, in which we have become blind to the wrath of God that is raging against us.

The Prayers Distinguished from the Mass

I am ready, however, to admit that the prayers which we pour out before God when we are gathered together to partake of the mass, are good works or benefits, which we impart, apply and communicate to one another, and which we offer for one another; as James teaches us to pray for one another that we may be saved, and as Paul, in 1 Timothy ii, commands that supplications, prayers and intercessions be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in high station. These are not the mass, but works of the mass—if the prayers of heart and lips may be called works—for they flow from the faith that is kindled or increased in the sacrament. For the mass, being the promise of God, is not fulfilled by praying, but only by believing; but when we believe, we shall also pray and perform every good work. But what priest of them all offers the sacrifice of the mass in this sense and believes that he is offering up naught but the prayers? They all imagine themselves to be offering up Christ Himself, as all-sufficient sacrifice, to God the

Jas. 5:16

1 Tim. 2:1 f.

Father, and to be performing a good work for all whom they have the intention to benefit. For they put their trust in the work which the mass accomplishes, and they do not ascribe this work to prayer. Thus, gradually, the error has grown, until they have come to ascribe to the sacrament what belongs to the prayers, and to offer to God what should be received as a benefit.

It is necessary, therefore, to make a sharp distinction between the testament or sacrament itself and the prayers which are there offered; and no less necessary to bear in mind that the prayers avail nothing, either for him who offers them or for those for whom they are offered, unless the sacrament be first received in faith, so that it is faith that offers the prayers, for it alone is heard, as James teaches in his first chapter. So great is the difference between prayer and the mass. The prayer may be extended to as many persons as one desires; but the mass is received by none but the person who believes for himself, and only in proportion to his faith. It cannot be given either to God or to men; but God alone gives it, by the ministration of the priest, to such men as receive it by faith alone, without any works or merits. For no one would dare to make the mad assertion that a ragged beggar does a good work when he comes to receive a gift from a rich man. But the mass is, as has been said,[1] the gift and promise of God, offered to all men by the hand of the priest. It is certain, therefore, that the mass is not a work which may be communicated to others, but it is the object, as it is called, of faith, for the strengthening and nourishing of the personal faith of each individual.

Jas. 1:6 f.

The Most Dangerous Error of All: the Mass a Sacrifice

But there is yet another stumbling-block that must be removed, and this is much greater and the most dangerous of all. It is the common belief that the mass is a sacrifice, which is offered to God. Even the words of the canon[2] tend in this direction, when they speak of "these gifts," "these

[1] See above, p. 196.

[2] That portion of the mass included between the Sanctus and the Lord's Prayer.

offerings," "this holy sacrifice," and farther on, of "this oblation." Prayer also is made, in so many words, "that the sacrifice may be accepted even as the sacrifice of Abel," etc., and hence Christ is termed the "Sacrifice of the altar." In addition to this there are the sayings of the holy Fathers, the great number of examples, and the constant usage and custom of all the world.

To all of this, firmly entrenched as it is, we must resolutely oppose the words and example of Christ. For unless we hold fast to the truth, that the mass is the promise or testament of Christ, as the words clearly say, we shall lose the whole Gospel and all our comfort. Let us permit
Gal. 1:8 nothing to prevail against these words, even though an angel from heaven should teach otherwise. For there is nothing said in them of a work or a sacrifice. Moreover, we have also the example of Christ on our side. For at the Last Supper, when He instituted this sacrament and established this testament, Christ did not offer Himself to God the Father, nor did He perform a good work on behalf of others, but He set this testament before each of them that sat at table with Him and offered him the sign. Now, the more closely our mass resembles that first mass of all, which Christ performed at the Last Supper, the more Christian will it be. But Christ's mass was most simple, without the pageantry of vestments, genuflections, chants and other ceremonies. Indeed, if it were necessary to offer the mass as a sacrifice, then Christ's institution of it was not complete.

Not that any one should revile the Church universal for embellishing and amplifying the mass with many additional rites and ceremonies. But this is what we contend for; no one should be deceived by the glamour of the ceremonies and entangled in the multitude of pompous forms, and thus lose the simplicity of the mass itself, and indeed practice a sort of transubstantiation—losing sight of the simple substance of the mass and clinging to the manifold accidents of outward pomp. For whatever has been added

to the word and example of Christ, is an accident of the mass, and ought to be regarded just as we regard the so-called monstrances and corporal cloths in which the host itself is contained.[1] Therefore, as distributing a testament, or accepting a promise, differs diametrically from offering a sacrifice, so it is a contradiction in terms to call the mass a sacrifice; for the former is something that we receive, while the latter is something that we offer. The same thing cannot be received and offered at the same time, nor can it be both given and taken by the same person; just as little as our prayer can be the same as that which our prayer obtains, or the act of praying the same as the act of receiving the answer to our prayer.

What shall we say, then, of the canon of the mass[2] and the sayings of the Fathers? First of all, if there were nothing at all to be said against them, it would yet be the safer course to reject them all rather than admit that the mass is a work or a sacrifice, lest we deny the word of Christ and overthrow faith together with the mass. Nevertheless, not to reject altogether the canons and the Fathers, we shall say the following: The Apostle instructs us in 1 Corinthians xi that it was customary for Christ's believers, when they came together to mass, to bring with them meat and drink, which they called "collections" and distributed among all who were in want, after the example of the apostles in Acts iv. From this store was taken the portion of bread and wine that was consecrated for use in the sacrament.[3] And since all this store of meat and drink was sanctified by the word and by prayer, being "lifted up" according to the Hebrew rite of which we read in Moses, the words and the rite of this lifting up, or offering, have come down to us, although the custom of collecting that which was offered, or lifted up, has fallen long since into disuse. Thus, in Isaiah xxxvii, Hezekiah commanded

1 Cor. 11:20 ff.

Acts 4:34 f.

1 Tim. 4:5

Lev. 8:27

Isa. 37:4

[1] See Vol. I, p. 312, and Prot. Realencyklop., XIV, 679, 41 ff.
[2] See above, p. 211, note 2.
[3] See above, p. 16.

Isaiah to lift up his prayer in the sight of God for the rem-
Ps. 134:2 nant. The Psalmist sings: "Lift up your hands to the
Ps. 63:4 holy places"; and: "To Thee will I lift up my hands."
1 Tim. 2:8 And in 1 Timothy ii we read: "Lifting up pure hands in every place." For this reason the words "sacrifice" and "oblation" must be taken to refer, not to the sacrament and testament, but to these collections, whence also the word "collect" has come down to us, as meaning the prayers said in the mass.

The same thing is indicated when the priest elevates the bread and the chalice immediately after the consecration, whereby he shows that he is not offering anything to God, for he does not say a single word here about a victim or an oblation. But this elevation is either a survival of that Hebrew rite of lifting up what was received with thanksgiving and returned to God, or else it is an admonition to us, to provoke us to faith in this testament which the priest has set forth and exhibited in the words of Christ, so that now he shows us also the sign of the testament. Thus the oblation of the bread properly accompanies the demonstrative t h i s in the words, "This is my body," by which sign the priest addresses us gathered about him; and in like manner the oblation of the chalice accompanies the demonstrative t h i s in the words, "This chalice is the new testament, etc." For it is faith that the priest ought to awaken in us by this act of elevation. And would to God that, as he elevates the sign, or sacrament, openly before our eyes, he might also sound in our ears the words of the testament with a loud, clear voice, and in the language of the people, whatever it may be, in order that faith may be the more effectively awakened. For why may mass be said in Greek and Latin and Hebrew,
Fraternal Advice to the Priests and not also in German or in any other language?[1]

Let the priests, therefore, who in these corrupt and perilous times offer the sacrifice of the mass, take heed,

[1] See Vol. I, p. 306.

first, that the words of the greater and the lesser canon[1] together with the collects, which smack too strongly of sacrifice, be not referred by them to the sacrament, but to the bread and wine which they consecrate, or to the prayers which they say. For the bread and wine are offered at the first, in order that they may be blessed and thus sanctified by the Word and by prayer; but after they have been blessed and consecrated, they are no longer offered, but received as a gift from God. And let the priest bear in mind that the Gospel is to be set above all canons and collects devised by men; and the Gospel does not sanction the calling of the mass a sacrifice, as has been shown.

Further, when a priest celebrates a public mass, he should determine to do naught else through the mass than to commune himself and others; yet he may at the same time offer prayers for himself and for others, but he must beware lest he presume to offer the mass. But let him that holds a private mass[2] determine to commune himself. The private mass does not differ in the least from the ordinary communion which any layman receives at the hand of the priest, and has no greater effect, apart from the special prayers and the fact that the priest consecrates the elements for himself and administers them to himself. So far as the blessing[3] of the mass and sacrament is concerned, we are all of us on an equal footing, whether we be priests or laymen.

If a priest be requested by others to celebrate so-called votive masses,[4] let him beware of accepting a reward for the mass, or of presuming to offer a votive sacrifice; he should be at pains to refer all to the prayers which he offers

[1] The offertory prayers in the mass. Cf. Prot. Realencyklopädie, XII, 720, 46 ff.

[2] The private mass does not require the presence of a congregation. Besides the celebrant there need be present only a ministrant. There is no music, the mass is only read. See Realencyklopädie, XII, 723.

[3] The res sacramenti. See above, p. 182.

[4] Masses celebrated by special request or in honor of certain mysteries (e. g., of the Holy Trinity, of the Holy Spirit, or of angels). Realencyklopädie, XII, 722.

for the dead or the living, saying within himself, "I will go and partake of the sacrament for myself alone, and while partaking I will say a prayer for this one and that." Thus he will take his reward—to buy him food and clothing—not for the mass, but for the prayers. And let him not be disturbed because all the world holds and practices the contrary. You have the most sure Gospel, and relying on this you may well despise the opinions of men. But if you despise me and insist upon offering the mass and not the prayers alone, know that I have faithfully warned you and will be without blame on the day of judgment; you will have to bear your sin alone. I have said what I was bound to say as brother to brother for his soul's salvation; yours will be the gain if you observe it, yours the loss if you neglect it. And if some should even condemn what I have said, I reply in the words of Paul: "But evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse: erring and driving into error."

2 Tim. 3:13

From the above every one will readily understand what there is in that oft quoted saying of Gregory's[1]: "A mass celebrated by a wicked priest is not to be considered of less effect than one celebrated by any godly priest, and St. Peter's mass would not have been better than Judas the traitor's, if they had offered the sacrifice of the mass." Which saying has served many as a cloak to cover their godless doings, and because of it they have invented the distinction between opus operati and opus operantis,[2] so as to be free to lead wicked lives themselves and yet to benefit other men. But Gregory speaks truth; only they misunderstand and pervert his words. For it is true beyond a question, that the testament or sacrament is given and received through the ministration of wicked priests no less completely than through the ministration of the most saintly. For who has any doubt that the Gospel is preached by the ungodly? Now

[1] Pope Gregory I. See Realencyklopädie, XII, 681 f.
[2] See above, p. 196, note, and comp. Seeberg, Dogmengesch., III, 461 f.

the mass is part of the Gospel, nay, its sum and substance; for what is the whole Gospel but the good tidings of the forgiveness of sins? But whatever can be said of the forgiveness of sins and the mercy of God, is all briefly comprehended in the word of this testament. Wherefore the popular sermons ought to be naught else than expositions of the mass, that is, a setting forth of the divine promise of this testament; that would be to teach faith and truly to edify the Church. But in our day the expounders of the mass play with the allegories of human rites and play the fool with the people.

Therefore, just as a wicked priest may baptise, that is, apply the word of promise and the sign of the water to a candidate for baptism, so he may also set forth the promise of this sacrament and administer it to those who partake, and even himself partake, like Judas the traitor, at the Lord's Supper. It still remains always the same sacrament and testament, which works in the believer its own work, in the unbeliever a "strange work." But when it comes to offering a sacrifice the case is quite different. For not the mass but the prayers are offered to God, and therefore it is as plain as day that the offerings of a wicked priest avail nothing, but, as Gregory says again, when an unworthy intercessor is chosen, the heart of the judge is moved to greater displeasure. We must, therefore, not confound these two—the mass and the prayers, the sacrament and the work, the testament and the sacrifice; for the one comes from God to us, through the ministration of the priest, and demands our faith, the other proceeds from our faith to God, through the priest, and demands His answer. The former descends, the latter ascends. Therefore the former does not necessarily require a worthy and godly minister, but the latter does indeed require such an one, because God heareth not sinners. He knows how to send down blessings through evildoers, but He does not accept the work of any evildoer, as He showed in the case of Cain, and as it is said in Proverbs xv, "The victims

Isa. 28:21

John 9:31

Gen. 4:5

Prov. 15:8

Rom. 14:23

of the wicked are abominable to the Lord"; and in Romans xiv, "All that is not of faith is sin."

Worthy Communicants

But in order to make an end of this first part, we must take up one remaining point against which an opponent might arise. From all that has been said we conclude that the mass was provided only for such as have a sad, afflicted, disturbed, perplexed and erring conscience, and that they alone commune worthily. For, since the word of divine promise in this sacrament sets forth the remission of sins, that man may fearlessly draw near, whoever he be, whose sins distress him, either with remorse for past or with temptation to future wrongdoing. For this testament of Christ is the one remedy against sins, past, present and future, if you but cling to it with unwavering faith and believe that what the words of the testament declare is freely granted to you. But if you do not believe this, you will never, nowhere, and by no works or efforts of your own, find peace of conscience. For faith alone sets the conscience at peace, and unbelief alone keeps the conscience troubled.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to the riches of His mercy hath preserved in His Church this sacrament at least, untouched and untainted by the ordinances of men, and hath made it free unto all nations and every estate of mankind, nor suffered it to be oppressed by the filthy and godless monsters of greed and superstition. For He desired that by it little children, incapable of greed and superstition, might be initiated and sanctified in the simple faith of His Word; for whom even to-day baptism hath its chief blessing. But if this sacrament were to be given to such as had arrived at man's estate, methinks it could not possibly have retained its power and its glory against the tyranny of greed and superstition which has everywhere laid waste

things divine. Doubtless the wisdom of the flesh would here too have devised its preparations and worthinesses, its reservations, restrictions, and I know not what other snares for taking money, until water fetched as high a price as parchment[1] does now.

But Satan, though he could not quench the power of baptism in little children, nevertheless succeeded in quenching it in all adults, so that there are scarce any who call to mind their baptism and still fewer who glory in it; so many other ways have they discovered of ridding themselves of their sins and of reaching heaven. The source of these false opinions is that dangerous saying of St. Jerome's[2]—either unhappily phrased or wrongly interpreted—in which he terms penance "the second plank" after the shipwreck; as if baptism were not penance. Accordingly, when men fall into sin, they despair of "the first plank," which is the ship, as though it had gone under, and fasten all their faith on the second plank, that is, penance. This has produced those endless burdens of vows, religious works, satisfactions, pilgrimages, indulgences, and sects,[3] whence has arisen that flood of books, questions, opinions and human traditions, which the world cannot contain; so that this tyranny plays worse havoc with the Church of God than any tyrant ever did with the Jewish people or with any other nation under heaven.

It was the duty of the pontiffs to abate this evil, and with all diligence to lead Christians to the true understanding of baptism, so that they might know what manner of men they are and how it becomes Christians to live. But instead of this, their work is now to lead the people as far astray as possible from their baptism, to immerse all men in the flood of their oppression, and to cause the people of Christ, as the prophet says, to forget Him days without Jer. 2:32
number. O unhappy, all who bear the name of priest

[1] For letters of indulgence.
[2] Ep. 130, 9 (MIGNE, XXII, 1115).
[3] Factions in the monastic orders.

to-day! They not only do not know nor do what becometh priests, but they are ignorant of what they ought to know
Isa. 56:10 and do. They fulfil the saying in Isaiah lvi: "His watchmen are all blind, they are all ignorant: the shepherds themselves knew no understanding; all have declined into their own way, every one after his own gain."

The First Part of Baptism: The Divine Promise

Now, the first thing in baptism to be considered is the divine promise, which says: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." This promise must be set far above all the glitter of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever man has added thereto; for on it all our salvation depends. But we must so consider it as to exercise our
Mark 16:16 faith therein and in nowise doubt that we are saved when we are baptised. For unless this faith be present or be conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing, nay, it becomes a hindrance to us, not only in the moment of its reception, but all the days of our life; for such unbelief accuses God's promise of being a lie, and this is the blackest of all sins. If we set ourselves to this exercise of faith, we shall at once perceive how difficult it is to believe this promise of God. For our human weakness, conscious of its sins, finds nothing more difficult to believe than that it is saved or will be saved; and yet unless it does believe this, it cannot be saved, because it does not believe the truth of God that promiseth salvation.

This message should have been untiringly impressed upon the people and this promise dinned without ceasing in their ears; their baptism should have been called again and again to their mind, and faith constantly awakened and nourished. For, just as the truth of this divine promise, once pronounced over us, continues unto death, so our faith in the same ought never to cease, but to be nourished and strengthened until death, by the continual remembrance of this promise made to us in baptism. Therefore, when we rise from sins, or repent, we do but return to the power and the faith of baptism from whence

we fell, and find our way back to the promise then made to us, from which we departed when we sinned. For the truth of the promise once made remains steadfast, ever ready to receive us back with open arms when we return. This, if I mistake not, is the real meaning of the obscure saying, that baptism is the beginning and foundation of all the sacraments, without which none of the others may be received.

It will, therefore, be no small gain for a penitent to lay hold before all else on the memory of his baptism, confidently to call to mind the promise of God, which he has forsaken, and to plead it with His Lord, rejoicing that he is baptised and therefore is yet within the fortress of salvation, and abhorring his wicked ingratitude in falling away from its faith and truth. His soul will find wondrous comfort, and will be encouraged to hope for mercy, when he considers that the divine promise which God made to him and which cannot possibly lie, still stands unbroken and unchanged, yea, unchangeable by any sins; as Paul says in II Timothy ii, "If we believe not, He continueth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." Ay, this truth of God will sustain him, so that if all else should sink in ruins, this truth, if he believe it, will not fail him. For in it he has a shield against all assaults of the enemy, an answer to the sins that disturb his conscience, an antidote for the dread of death and judgment, and a comfort in every temptation,—namely, this one truth,—and he can say, "God is faithful that promised, Whose sign I have received in my baptism. If God be for me, who is against me?"

2 Tim. 2:13

Heb. 10:23

Rom. 8:31

The children of Israel, whenever they repented of their sins, turned their thoughts first of all to the exodus from Egypt, and, remembering this, returned to God Who had brought them out. This memory and this refuge were many times impressed upon them by Moses, and afterward repeated by David. How much rather ought we to call to mind our exodus from Egypt, and, remembering, turn back again to Him Who led us forth through the washing of

Titus 3:5

regeneration, which we are bidden remember for this very purpose. And this we can do most fittingly in the sacrament of bread and wine. Indeed, in olden times these three sacraments—penance, baptism and the bread—were all celebrated at the same service, and one supplemented and assisted the other. We read also of a certain holy virgin who in every time of temptation made baptism her sole defence, saying simply, "I am a Christian"; and straightway the adversary fled from her, for he knew the power of her baptism and of her faith which clung to the truth of God's promise.[1]

Lo, how rich therefore is a Christian, or one who is baptised! Even if he would, he cannot lose his salvation, however much he sin, unless he will not believe. For no sin can condemn him save unbelief alone. All other sins,—if faith in God's promise made in baptism return or remain, —all other sins, I say, are immediately blotted out through that same faith, or rather through the truth of God, because He cannot deny Himself if you but confess Him and cling believing to Him that promises. But as for contrition, confession of sins, and satisfaction,[2]—with all those carefully thought-out exercises of men,—if you turn your attention to them and neglect this truth of God, they will suddenly fail you and leave you more wretched than before. For
Eccl. 1:2, 14 whatever is done without faith in the truth of God, is vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit.

Again, how perilous, nay, how false it is to suppose that penance is the second plank after the shipwreck! How harmful an error it is to believe that the power of baptism is broken, and the ship has foundered, because we have sinned! Nay; that one, solid and unsinkable ship remains, and is never broken up into floating timbers; it carries all those who are brought to the harbor of salvation; it is the truth of God giving us its promise in the sacraments.

[1] The reference may be to Blandina, who suffered martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius.

[2] The three parts of penance; see below, p. 247.

Many, indeed, rashly leap overboard and perish in the waves; these are they who depart from faith in the promise and plunge into sin. But the ship herself remains intact and holds her steady course; and if one be able somehow to return to the ship, it is not on any plank but in the good ship herself that he is borne to life. Such an one is he who through faith returns to the sure promise of God that abideth forever. Therefore Peter, in his second epistle, rebukes them that sin, because they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins; in which words he doubtless chides their ingratitude for the baptism they had received and their wicked unbelief. 2 Peter 1:9

What is the good, then, of making many books on baptism and yet not teaching this faith in the promise? All the sacraments were instituted for the purpose of nourishing faith, but these godless men so completely pass over this faith that they even assert a man dare not be certain of the forgiveness of sins, that is, of the grace of the sacraments. With such wicked teachings they delude the world, and not only take captive but altogether destroy the sacrament of baptism, in which the chief glory of our conscience consists. Meanwhile they madly rage against the miserable souls of men with their contritions, anxious confessions, circumstances,[1] satisfactions, works and endless other absurdities. Read, therefore, with great caution the Master of the Sentences[2] in his fourth book, or, better yet, despise him together with all his commentators, who at their best write only of the material and form[3] of the sacraments, that is, they treat of the dead and death-dealing letter of the sacraments, but pass over in utter silence the spirit, life and use, that is, the truth of the divine promise and our faith.

Beware, therefore, lest the external pomp of works and the

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[1] See Vol. I, p. 91.

[2] Peter Lombard, the fourth book of whose Sentences treats of the sacraments; see above, p. 188.

[3] See p. 182, note 2.

deceits of human traditions mislead you, so that you may not wrong the divine truth and your faith. If you would be saved, you must begin with the faith of the sacraments, without any works whatever; but on faith the works will follow: only do not think lightly of faith, which is a work, and of all works the most excellent and the most difficult to do. Through it alone you will be saved, even if you should be compelled to do without any other works. For
Eph. 2:8 it is a work of God, not of man, as Paul teaches. The other works He works through us and with our help, but this one He works in us and without our help.

From this we can clearly see the difference, in baptism, between man the minister and God the Doer. For man baptises and does not baptise: he baptises, for he performs the work, immersing the person to be baptised; he does not baptise, for in that act he officiates not by his own authority, but in the stead of God. Hence, we ought to receive baptism at the hands of a man just as if Christ Himself, nay, God Himself, were baptising us with His own hands. For it is not man's baptism, but Christ's and God's baptism, which we receive by the hand of a man; just as every other created thing that we make use of by the hand of another, is God's alone. Therefore beware of dividing baptism in such a way as to ascribe the outward part to man and the inward part to God. Ascribe both to God alone, and look upon the person administering it as the instrument in God's hands, by which the Lord sitting in heaven thrusts you under the water with His own hands, and speaking by the mouth of His minister promises you, on earth with a human voice, the forgiveness of your sins.

This the words themselves indicate, when the priest says: "I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen"—and not: "I baptise thee in my own name." It is as though he said: "What I do, I do not by my own authority, but in the name and stead of God, so that you should regard it just as if our Lord Himself had done it in a visible manner. The Doer and the minister

are different persons, but the work of both is the same work, or, rather, it is the work of the Doer alone, through my ministry." For I hold that "in the name of" refers to the person of the Doer, so that the name of the Lord is not only to be uttered and invoked while the work is being done, but the work itself is to be done not as one's own work, but in the name and stead of another. In this sense Christ says, "Many shall come in my name," and in Romans i it is said, "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith, in all nations, for His name." Matt. 24:5 Rom. 1:5

This view I heartily endorse; for there is much of comfort and a mighty aid to faith in the knowledge that one has been baptised not by man, but by the Triune God Himself through a man acting among us in His name. This will dispose of that fruitless quarrel about the "form"[1] of baptism, as these words are called. The Greeks say: "May the servant of Christ be baptised," while the Latins say: "I baptise." Others again, pedantic triflers, condemn the use of the words, "I baptise thee in the name of Jesus Christ"[2]—although it is certain that the Apostles used this formula in baptising, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles—and would allow no other form to be valid than this: "I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But their contention is in vain, for they bring no proof, but merely assert their own dreams. Baptism truly saves in whatever way it is administered, if only it be not administered in the name of man but of God. Nay, I have no doubt that if one received baptism in the name of the Lord, even though the wicked minister should not give it in the name of the Lord, he would yet be truly baptised in the name of the Lord. For the effect of baptism depends not so much on the faith or use of him that confers it as on the faith or use of him that receives it; of

[1] The scholastics distinguished between the "material" and the "form" of a sacrament. In baptism, the material was the water; the form, the words, "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

[2] Alexander, of Hales, denied the validity of baptism "in the name of Jesus," which Peter Lombard defended. Cf. Realencyklopädie, XIX, 412.

which we have an illustration in the case of the play-actor who was baptised in jest.[1] Such anxious disputings and questionings are aroused in us by those who ascribe nothing to faith and everything to works and forms, whereas we owe everything to faith alone and nothing to forms, and faith makes us free in spirit from all those scruples and fancies.

The Second Part of Baptism: The Sign, or Sacrament

The second part of baptism is the sign, or sacrament, which is that immersion into water whence also it derives its name; for the Greek baptizo means I immerse, and baptisma means immersion. For, as has been said,[2] signs are added to the divine promises to represent that which the words signify, or, as they now say, that which the sacrament "effectively signifies." We shall see how much of truth there is in this. The great majority have supposed that there is some hidden spiritual power in the word or in the water, which works the grace of God in the soul of the recipient. Others deny this and hold that there is no power in the sacraments, but that grace is given by God alone, Who according to His covenant aids the sacraments He has instituted.[3] Yet all are agreed that the sacraments are effective signs of grace, and they reach this conclusion by this one argument: If the sacraments of the New Law merely "signified," it would not be apparent in what respect they surpassed the sacraments of the Old Law. Hence they have been driven to attribute such great power to the sacraments of the New Law that in their opinion they benefit even such men as are in mortal sins, and that they do not

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[1] Cf. Weimar Ed., I, 544, and Erlangen Ed., XLIV, 114 ff.

[2] See above, p. 203.

[3] A point at issue between Thomists and Franciscans. The former held that the grace of the sacrament was contained in the sacramental sign and directly imparted through it; thus Aquinas. The Franciscans contended that the sign was merely a symbol, but that God, according to a pactio, or agreement, imparted the grace of the sacrament when the sign was being used; thus Bonaventura, and especially Duns Scotus. See Seeberg, DG., III, 455 ff., and in Realencyklopädie, V, 73.

require faith or grace; it is sufficient not to oppose a "bar," that is, an actual intention to sin again.

But these views must be carefully avoided and shunned, because they are godless and infidel, being contrary to faith and to the nature of the sacraments. For it is an error to hold that the sacraments of the New Law differ from those of the Old Law in the efficacy of their "signifying." The "signifying" of both is equally efficacious. The same God Who now saves me by baptism saved Abel by his sacrifice, Noah by the bow, Abraham by circumcision, and all the others by their respective signs. So far as the "signifying" is concerned, there is no difference between a sacrament of the Old Law and one of the New; provided that by the Old Law you mean that which God wrought among the patriarchs and other fathers in the days of the law. But those signs which were given to the patriarchs and fathers must be sharply distinguished from the legal types which Moses instituted in his law, such as the priestly rites concerning robes, vessels, meats, dwellings, and the like. Between these and the sacraments of the New Law there is a vast difference, but no less between them and those signs that God from time to time gave to the fathers living under the law, such as the sign of Gideon's fleece, Manoah's sacrifice, or the sign which Isaiah offered to Ahaz, in Isaiah vii; for to these signs God attached a certain promise which required faith in Him.

Judges 6:36; 13:19

Isa. 7:10

This, then, is the difference between the legal types and the new and old signs—the former have not attached to them any word of promise requiring faith. Hence they are not signs of justification, for they are not sacraments of the faith that alone justifies, but only sacraments of works; their whole power and nature consisted in works, not in faith, and he that observed them fulfilled them, even if he did it without faith. But our signs, or sacraments, as well as those of the fathers, have attached to them a word of promise, which requires faith, and they cannot be fulfilled by any other work. Hence they are signs or sacra-

ments of justification, for they are the sacraments of justifying faith and not of works. Their whole efficacy, therefore, consists in faith itself, not in the doing of a work; for whoever believes them fulfils them, even if he should not do a single work. Whence has arisen the saying, "Not the sacrament but the faith of the sacrament justifies." Thus circumcision did not justify Abraham and his seed,
Rom. 4:11 and yet the Apostle calls it the seal of the righteousness of faith, because faith in the promise, to which circumcision was added, justified him and fulfilled that which circumci-
Deut. 10:16 Jer. 4:4 sion signified. For faith was the spiritual circumcision of the foreskin of the heart, which was symbolised by the literal circumcision of the flesh. And in the same manner it was obviously not Abel's sacrifice that justified him, but it was his faith, by which he offered himself wholly to God and which was symbolised by the outward sacrifice.

Even so it is not baptism that justifies or benefits anyone, but it is faith in the word of promise, to which baptism is added. This faith justifies, and fulfils that which baptism signifies. For faith is the submersion of the old man and the emerging of the new. Therefore it cannot be that the new sacraments differ from the old, for both have the divine promise and the same spirit of faith; although they do differ vastly from the olden types on account of the word of promise, which is the one decisive point of difference. Even so, to-day, the outward show of vestments, holy places, meats and of all the endless ceremonies has doubtless a fine symbolical meaning, which is to be spiritually fulfilled; and yet because there is no word of divine promise attached to these things, they can in nowise be compared with the signs of baptism and of the bread, nor do they in any way justify or benefit one, since they are fulfilled in the very observance, apart from faith. For while they are taking place or are being performed, they are being ful-
Col. 2:22 filled; as the Apostle says of them, in Colossians ii, "Which are all to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men." The sacraments, on the contrary,

are not fulfilled when they are observed, but when they are believed.

It cannot be true, therefore, that there is in the sacraments a power efficacious for justification, or that they are effective signs of grace.[1] All such assertions tend to destroy faith, and arise from ignorance of the divine promise. Unless you should call them effective in the sense that they certainly and efficaciously impart grace, where faith is unmistakably present. But it is not in this sense that efficacy is now ascribed to them; as witness the fact that they are said to benefit all men, even the godless and unbelieving, provided they do not oppose a "bar"—as if such unbelief were not in itself the most obstinate and hostile of all bars to grace. So firmly bent are they on turning the sacrament into a command, and faith into a work. For if the sacrament confers grace on me because I receive it, then indeed I obtain grace by virtue of my work and not of faith; I lay hold not on the promise in the sacrament, but on the sign instituted and commanded by God. Do you not see, then, how completely the sacraments have been misunderstood by our sententious theologians?[2] They have taken no account, in their discussions on the sacraments, of either faith or the promise, but cling only to the sign and the use of the sign, and draw us away from faith to the work, from the word to the sign. Thus they have not only carried the sacraments captive (as I have said),[3] but have completely destroyed them, as far as they were able.

Therefore, let us open our eyes and learn to give more heed to the word than to the sign,[4] and to faith than to the work, or the use of the sign, remembering that wherever there is a divine promise there faith is required, and that these two are so necessary to each other that neither

[1] The conclusion of the investigation begun on p. 226.
[2] See above, p. 204.
[3] See above, p. 223.
[4] See above, p. 226.

can be efficacious apart from the other. For it is not possible to believe unless there be a promise, and the promise is not established unless it be believed. But where these two meet, they give a real and most certain efficacy to the sacraments. Hence, to seek the efficacy of the sacrament apart from the promise and apart from faith, is to labor in vain and to find damnation. Thus Christ says: "He that
Mark 16:16 believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." He shows us in this word that faith is so necessary a part of the sacrament that it can save even without the sacrament; for which reason He did not see fit to say: "He that believeth not, and is not baptised. . . "

Baptism, then, signifies two things—death and resurrection; that is, full and complete justification. The minister's immersing the child in the water signifies death; his drawing it forth again signifies life. Thus Paul ex-
Rom. 6:4 pounds it in Romans vi, "We are buried together with Christ by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." This death and resurrection we call the new creation, regeneration, and the spiritual birth. And this must not be understood only in a figurative sense, of the death of sin and the life of grace, as many understand it, but of actual death and resurrection. The significance of baptism is not an imaginary significance, and sin does not completely die, nor does grace completely rise, until the body of sin that we carry about in this life is de-
Rom. 6:6 stroyed; as the Apostle teaches in the same chapter. For as long as we are in the flesh, the desires of the flesh stir and are stirred. Wherefore, as soon as ever we begin to believe, we also begin to die to this world and to live unto God in the life to come; so that faith is truly a death and a resurrection, that is, it is that spiritual baptism in which we go under and come forth.

Hence it is indeed correct to say that baptism is a washing from sins, but that expression is too weak and mild

to bring out the full significance of baptism, which is rather a symbol of death and resurrection. For this reason I would have the candidates for baptism completely immersed in the water, as the word[1] says and as the sacrament signifies. Not that I deem this necessary, but it were well to give to so perfect and complete a thing[2] a perfect and complete sign; thus it was also doubtless instituted by Christ. The sinner does not so much need to be washed as he needs to die, in order to be wholly renewed and made another creature, and to be conformed to the death and resurrection of Christ, with Whom, through baptism, he dies and rises again. Although you may properly say that Christ was washed clean of mortality when He died and rose again, yet that is a weaker way of putting it than if you said He was completely changed and renewed. In the same way it is far more forceful to say that baptism signifies our utter dying and rising to eternal life, than to say that it signifies merely our being washed clean from sins.

Here, again, you see that the sacrament of baptism, even in respect to its sign, is not the matter of a moment, but continues for all time. Although its administration is soon over, yet the thing it signifies[2] continues until we die, nay, until we rise at the last day. For as long as we live we are continually doing that which our baptism signifies,—we die and rise again. We die, that is, not only spiritually and in our affections, by renouncing the sins and vanities of this world, but we die in very truth, we begin to leave this bodily life and to lay hold on the life to come; so that there is, as they say, a real and even a bodily going out of this world to the Father.

We must, therefore, beware of those who have reduced the power of baptism to such a vanishing point as to say that the grace of God is indeed inpoured in baptism, but afterwards poured out again through sin, and that thereupon one must reach heaven by another way; as if baptism had

[1] Baptisma; see above, p. 226, and compare Vol. I, p. 56.
[2] Res. See above, p. 182, note 2.

then become entirely useless. Do not you hold to such a view, but know that baptism signifies your dying and living again, and therefore, whether it be by penance or by any other way, you can but return to the power of your baptism, and do afresh that which you were baptised to do and which your baptism signified. Never does baptism lose its power, unless you despair and refuse to return to its salvation. You may, indeed, for a season wander away from the sign, but that does not make the sign of none effect. You have, thus, been baptised once in the sacrament, but you must be constantly baptised again through faith, you must constantly die, you must constantly live again. Baptism swallowed up your whole body, and gave it forth again; even so that which baptism signifies[1] should swallow up your whole life in body and soul, and give it forth again at the last day, clad in robes of glory and immortality. We are, therefore, never without the sign of baptism nor yet without the thing it signifies; nay, we must be baptised ever more and more completely, until we perfectly fulfil the sign, at the last day.

Therefore, whatever we do in this life that avails for the mortifying of the flesh and the giving life to the spirit, belongs to baptism; and the sooner we depart this life the sooner do we fulfil our baptism, and the greater our sufferings the more closely do we conform to our baptism. Hence
Ps. 44:22 Rom. 8:36 those were the Church's halcyon days, when the martyrs were being killed every day and accounted as sheep for the slaughter; for then the power of baptism reigned supreme in the Church, which power we have to-day lost sight of amid the multitude of works and doctrines of men. For all our life should be baptism, and the fulfilling of the sign, or sacrament, of baptism; we have been set free from all else and wholly given over to baptism alone, that is, to death and resurrection.

The Glorious Liberty of the Baptised

This glorious liberty of ours, and this understanding of baptism have been carried captive in our day; and whom have we to thank for this but the Roman pontiff

[1] Res baptismi. See above, p. 231.

with his despotism? More than all others, it was his first duty, as chief shepherd, to preach and defend this liberty and this knowledge, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries, or sacraments,[1] of God." Instead of this, he seeks only to oppress us with his decrees and his laws, and to enslave and ensnare us in the tyranny of his power. By what right, in God's name, does the pope impose his laws upon us? to say nothing of his wicked and damnable neglect to teach these mysteries. Who gave him power to despoil us of this liberty, granted us in baptism? One thing only (as I have said)[2] has been enjoined upon us all the days of our life,—to be baptised; that is, to be put to death and to live again, through faith in Christ; and this faith alone should have been taught, especially by the chief shepherd. But now there is not a word said about faith, and the Church is laid waste with endless laws concerning works and ceremonies; the power and right understanding of baptism are put by, and faith in Christ is prevented. 1 Cor. 4:1

Therefore I say: Neither pope nor bishop nor any other man has the right to impose a single syllable of law upon a Christian man without his consent; and if he does, it is done in the spirit of tyranny. Therefore the prayers, fasts, donations, and whatever else the pope decrees and demands in all of his decretals, as numerous as they are iniquitous, he demands and decrees without any right whatever; and he sins against the liberty of the Church whenever he attempts any such thing. Hence it has come to pass that the churchmen of our day are indeed such vigorous defenders of the liberty of the Church, that is, of wood and stone, of land and rents—for "churchly" is nowadays the same as "spiritual"—yet with such fictions they not only take captive but utterly destroy the true liberty of the Church, and deal with us far worse than the Turk, in opposition to the word of the Apostle, "Be not made the bond- 1 Cor. 7:23

[1] Cf. below, pp. 258 ff.
[2] See above, p. 231.

slaves of men." For, verily, to be subjected to their statutes and tyrannical laws is to be made the bondslaves of men.

This impious and desperate tyranny is fostered by the pope's disciples, who here drag in and pervert that saying of Christ, "He that heareth you heareth me." With puffed cheeks they blow up this saying to a great size in support of their traditions. Though Christ spake it to the apostles when they went forth to preach the Gospel, and though it applies solely to the Gospel, they pass over the Gospel and apply it only to their fables. He says in John x: "My sheep hear my voice, but the voice of a stranger they hear not"; and to this end He left us the Gospel, that His voice might be uttered by the pontiffs. But they utter their own voice, and themselves desire to be heard. Moreover, the Apostle says that he was not sent to baptise but to preach the Gospel. Therefore, no one is bound to the traditions of the pope, nor does he need to give ear to him unless he teaches the Gospel and Christ, and the pope should teach nothing but faith without any restrictions. But since Christ says, "He that heareth you heareth me," and does not say to Peter only, "He that heareth thee"; why does not the pope also hear others? In fine, where there is true faith, there must also be the word of faith. Why then does not an unbelieving pope now and then hear a believing servant of his, who has the word of faith? It is blindness, sheer blindness, that holds the popes in its power.

Luke 10:16

John 10:27

1 Cor. 1:17

Luke 10:16

But others, more shameless still, arrogantly ascribe to the pope the power to make laws, on the basis of Matthew xvi, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind," etc., though Christ treats in this passage of binding and loosing sins, not of taking the whole Church captive and oppressing it with laws. So this tyranny treats everything with its own lying words and violently wrests and perverts the words of God. I admit indeed that Christians ought to bear this accursed tyranny just as they would bear any other violence of this

Matt. 16:19

world, according to Christ's word: "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other." But this is my complaint,—that the godless pontiffs boastfully claim the right to do this, that they pretend to be seeking the Church's welfare with this Babylon of theirs, and that they foist this fiction upon all mankind. For if they did these things, and we suffered their violence, well knowing, both of us, that it was godlessness and tyranny, then we might number it among the things that tend to the mortifying of this life and the fulfilling of our baptism, and might with a good conscience glory in the inflicted injury. But now they seek to deprive us of this consciousness of our liberty, and would have us believe that what they do is well done, and must not be censured or complained of as wrongdoing. Being wolves, they masquerade as shepherds; being antichrists, they would be honored as Christ. Matt. 5:39

Solely in behalf of this freedom of conscience, I lift my voice and confidently cry: No laws may by any right be laid upon Christians, whether by men or angels, without their consent; for we are free from all things. And if any laws are laid upon us, we must bear them in such a way as to preserve the consciousness of our liberty, and know and certainly affirm that the making of such laws is an injustice, which we will bear and glory in, giving heed not to justify the tyrant nor yet to rebel against his tyranny. "For who is he," says Peter, "that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" "All things work together for good to the elect." 1 Pet. 3:13 Rom. 8:28

Nevertheless, since but few know this glory of baptism and the blessedness of Christian liberty, and cannot know them because of the tyranny of the pope, I for one will clear my skirts and salve my conscience by bringing this charge against the pope and all his papists: Unless they will abolish their laws and traditions, and restore to Christ's churches their liberty and have it taught among them, they are guilty of all the souls that perish under this miserable captivity, and the papacy is of a truth the king-

2 Thess. 2:3 f. dom of Babylon, yea, of very Antichrist! For who is "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition" but he that with his doctrines and his laws increases sins and the perdition of souls in the Church, while he sitteth in the Church as if he were God? All this the papal tyranny has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, these many centuries; it has extinguished faith, obscured the sacraments and oppressed the Gospel; but its own laws, which are not only impious and sacrilegious, but even barbarous and foolish, it has enjoined and multiplied world without end.

Lament. 1:1 f. Behold, then, our miserable captivity; how the city doth sit solitary that was full of people! How the mistress of the Gentiles is become as a widow: the princess of provinces made tributary! There is none to comfort her, all her friends have despised her. So many orders, so many rites, so many sects, so many professions, exertions and works, in which Christians are engaged, until they lose sight of their bap-

Joel 1:4 tism, and for this swarm of locusts, cankerworms and caterpillars not one of them is able to remember that he is baptised or what blessings his baptism brought him. We should be even as little children, newly baptised, who are engaged in no efforts and no works, but are free in every way, secure and saved solely through the glory of their baptism. For we are indeed little children, continually baptised anew in Christ.

Infant Baptism In contradiction of what has been said, some will perhaps point to the baptism of infants, who do not grasp the promise of God and cannot have the faith of baptism; so that either faith is not necessary or else infant baptism is without effect. Here I say what all say: Infants are aided by the faith of others, namely, those who bring them to baptism.[1] For the Word of God is powerful, when it is uttered, to change even a godless heart, which is no less deaf and helpless than any infant. Even so the infant is

[1] The position of Thomas Aquinas, going back to Augustine, and ratified by Clement V at the Council of Vienna, 1311–12.

changed, cleansed and renewed by inpoured faith, through the prayer of the Church that presents it for baptism and believes, to which prayer all things are possible. Nor should I doubt that even a godless adult might be changed, in any of the sacraments, if the same Church prayed and presented him; as we read in the Gospel of the man sick of the palsy, who was healed through the faith of others. I should be ready to admit that in this sense the sacraments of the New Law are efficacious to confer grace, not only to those who do not, but even to those who do most obstinately, oppose a bar.[1] What obstacle will not the faith of the Church and the prayer of faith remove? Do we not believe that Stephen by this powerful means converted Paul the Apostle? But then the sacraments accomplish what they do not by their own power, but by the power of faith, without which they accomplish nothing at all, as has been said.[2]

Mark 9:23

Matt. 9:1 ff.

There remains the question, whether it is right to baptise an infant not yet born, with only a hand or a foot presenting. Here I will decide nothing hastily, and confess my ignorance. I am not sure whether the reason given by some is sufficient,—that the soul resides in its entirety in every part of the body; for it is not the soul but the body that is externally baptised with water. Nor do I share the view of others, that he who is not yet born cannot be born again, even though it has considerable force. I leave these matters to the teaching of the Spirit, and meanwhile permit every one to abound in his own sense.

Rom. 14:5 (Vulg.)

Vows and the Baptismal Vow

One thing I will add—and would to God I might persuade all to do it!—viz., completely to abolish or avoid all vows, be they vows to enter religious orders, to make pilgrimages or to do any works whatsoever, that we may remain in the liberty of our baptism, which is the most religious and rich in works. It is impossible to say how

[1] See above, p. 227.
[2] See above, pp. 227 ff.

greatly that widespread delusion of vows lowers baptism and obscures the knowledge of Christian liberty; to say nothing now of the unspeakable and infinite peril of souls which that mania for making vows and that ill-advised rashness daily increase. O most godless pontiffs and unhappy pastors, who slumber on unheeding and indulge your evil lusts, without pity for this "affliction of Joseph," so dreadful and fraught with peril!

Amos 6:4–6

Vows should either be abolished by a general edict, particularly such as are taken for life, and all men diligently recalled to the vows of baptism, or else everyone should be warned not to take a vow rashly, and no one encouraged to do so, nay, permission be given only with difficulty and reluctance. For we have vowed enough in baptism, nay, more than we can ever fulfil; if we give ourselves to the keeping of this one vow, we shall have all we can do. But now we compass earth and sea to make many proselytes; we fill the world with priests, monks and nuns, and imprison them all in life-long vows. You will find those who argue and decide that a work done in fulfilment of a vow ranks higher than one done without a vow, and is to be rewarded with I know not what great rewards in heaven. Blind and godless Pharisees, who measure righteousness and holiness by the greatness, number or other quality of the works! But God measures them by faith alone, and with Him there is no difference between works except that which is wrought by faith.

Matt. 23:15

With such bombast these wicked men advertise their inventions and puff up human works, to lure on the unthinking populace, who are almost always led by the glitter of works to make shipwreck of their faith, to forget their baptism and do despite to their Christian liberty. For a vow is a kind of law or requirement; therefore, when vows are multiplied, laws and works are necessarily multiplied, and when this is done, faith is extinguished and the liberty of baptism taken captive. Others, not content with these wicked allurements, add yet this and say that entrance into

a religious order is a new baptism,[1] as it were, which may afterward be repeated as often as the purpose to live the religious life is renewed. Thus these "votaries" have appropriated to themselves all righteousness, salvation and glory, and left to those who are merely baptised nothing to compare with them. Nay, the Roman pontiff, that fountain and source of all superstitions, confirms, approves and adorns this mode of life with high-sounding bulls and dispensations, while no one deems baptism worthy of even a thought. And with such glittering pomp (as we have said)[2] they drive the easily led people of Christ into certain disaster, so that in their ingratitude toward baptism they presume to achieve greater things by their works than others achieve by their faith.

Therefore, God again shows Himself froward to the fro- Ps. 18:26
ward, and to repay the makers of vows for their ingratitude and pride, causes them to break their vows or to keep them only with prodigious labor; to remain sunk in them, never coming to the knowledge of the grace of faith and baptism; to continue in their hypocrisy unto the end—since their spirit is not approved of God—and at last to become a laughing-stock to the whole world, ever ensuing righteousness and never attaining unto righteousness; so that they fulfil the word of Isaiah: "The land is full of idols." Isa. 2:8

I am indeed far from forbidding or discouraging any one who may desire to take a vow privately and of his own free choice; for I would not altogether despise and condemn vows. But I would most strongly advise against setting up and sanctioning the making of vows as a public mode of life. It is enough that every one should have the private right to take a vow at his peril; but to commend the vowing of vows as a public mode of life—this I hold to be most harmful to the Church and to simple souls. And I hold this, first, because it runs directly counter to the

[1] For a full discussion of this "baptism," see SCHEEL, in the Berlin Edition of Luther's works, Ergänzungsband II, pp. 134–157.

[2] See above, p. 238.

Christian life; for a vow is a certain ceremonial law and a human tradition or presumption, and from these the Christian has been set free through baptism. For a Christian is subject to no laws but the law of God. Again, there is no instance in Scripture of such a vow, especially of life-long chastity, obedience and poverty.[1] But whatever is without warrant of Scripture is hazardous and should by no means be commended to any one, much less established as a common and public mode of life, although whoever will must be permitted to make the venture at his own peril. For certain works are wrought by the Spirit in a few men, but they must not be made an example or a mode of life for all.

Moreover, I greatly fear that these modes of life of the religious orders belong to those things which the Apostle
1 Tim. 4:2 f. foretold: "They shall teach a lie in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry, to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." Let no one retort by pointing to Sts. Bernard, Francis, Dominic and others, who founded or fostered monastic orders. Terrible and marvelous is God in His counsels toward the sons of men. He
Dan. 1:6 ff. could keep Daniel, Ananias, Azarias and Misael holy at the court of the king of Babylon, that is, in the midst of godlessness; why could He not sanctify those men also in their perilous mode of living or guide them by the special operation of His Spirit, yet without desiring it to be an example to others? Besides, it is certain that none of them was saved through his vows and his "religious" life; they were saved through faith alone, by which all men are saved, and with which that splendid slavery of vows is more than anything else in conflict.

Rom. 14:5 But every one may hold to his own view of this. I will return to my argument. Speaking now in behalf of the Church's liberty and the glory of baptism, I feel myself in duty bound publicly to set forth the counsel I have learned under the Spirit's guidance. I therefore counsel the mag-

[1] The threefold vow of the mendicant orders.

nates of the churches, first of all, to abolish all those vows, or at least not to approve and extol them. If they will not do this, then I counsel all men who would be assured of their salvation, to abstain from all vows, above all from the great and life-long vows; I give this counsel especially to all growing boys and youths. This I do, first, because this manner of life has no witness or warrant in the Scriptures, as I have said, but is puffed up solely by the bulls (and they truly are "bulls")[1] of human popes. And, secondly, because it greatly tends to hypocrisy, by reason of its outward show and its unusual character, which engender conceit and a contempt of the common Christian life. And if there were no other reason for abolishing these vows, this one were reason enough, namely, that through them faith and baptism are slighted and works are exalted, which cannot be done without harmful results. For in the religious orders there is scarce one in many thousands, who is not more concerned about works than about faith, and on the basis of this madness they have even made distinctions among themselves, such as "the more strict" and "the more lax," as they call them.[2]

Therefore I advise no one to enter any religious order or the priesthood—nay, I dissuade everyone—unless he be forearmed with this knowledge and understand that the works of monks and priests, be they never so holy and arduous, differ no whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic toiling in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before Him by faith alone; as Jeremiah says: "O Lord, thine eyes are upon faith"; and Ecclesiasticus: "In every work of thine regard thy soul in faith: for this is the keeping of the commandments." Nay, he should know that the menial housework of a maidservant or manservant is ofttimes more acceptable to God than all the fastings and other works of a monk or a priest, because the latter lacks faith. Since,

Jer. 5:3

Eccles. 32:27

[1] Bulla means both a papal bull and a bubble.

[2] Compare above, p. 172, note 4.

therefore, vows seem to tend nowadays only to the glorification of works and to pride, it is to be feared that there is nowhere less of faith and of the Church than among the priests, monks and bishops, and that these men are in truth heathen or hypocrites, who imagine themselves to be the Church or the heart of the Church, and "spiritual," and the Church's leaders, when they are everything else but that.

Ps. 64:1 (Vulg.) And it is to be feared that this is indeed "the people of the captivity," among whom all things freely given us in baptism are held captive, while "the people of the earth" are left behind in poverty and in small numbers, and, as is the lot of married folk, appear vile in their eyes.[1]

Papal Dispensations and their Inconsistency

From what has been said we learn that the Roman pontiff is guilty of two glaring errors. In the first place, he grants dispensations from vows,[2] and does it as though he alone of all Christians possessed this authority; such is the temerity and audacity of wicked men. If it be possible to grant a dispensation from a vow, then any brother may grant one to his neighbor or even to himself. But if one's neighbor cannot grant a dispensation, neither can the pope by any right. For whence has he his authority? From the power of the keys? But the keys belong to all, and avail only for sins (Matthew xviii).[3] Now they themselves claim that vows are "of divine right." Why then does the pope deceive and destroy the poor souls of men by granting dispensations in matters of divine right, in which no dispensations can be granted? He babbles indeed, in the section "Of vows and their redemption,"[4] of having the power to change vows, just as in the law the firstborn of an ass was changed for a sheep—as if the firstborn of an ass, and the vow he commands to be everywhere and always offered,

Matt. 18:15 ff.

Ex. 13:13

[1] An obscure allegorical reference to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. "The people of the captivity" (comp. Ps. 64:1 and 1 Kings 24:14, Vulgate) are the better portion of the people who were carried captive, together with their possessions, to Babylon; "the people of the earth," a m h a a r e z, the common people, were left behind and became the nucleus of the hybrid Samaritan nation.

[2] See above, p. 123.

[3] See above, p. 75.

[4] See Decretal. Greg., lib. III, tit. xxxiv, cap. 7.

were one and the same thing, or as if when God decrees in His law that a sheep shall be changed for an ass, the pope, a mere man, may straightway claim the same power, not in his own law but in God's! It was not a pope, but an ass changed for a pope,[1] that made this decretal; so egregiously senseless and godless is it.

The other error is this. The pope decrees, on the other hand, that marriage is dissolved if one party enter a monastery even without the consent of the other, provided the marriage be not yet consummated. Gramercy, what devil puts such monstrous things into the pope's mind! God commands men to keep faith and not break their word to one another, and again, to do good with that which is their own; for He hates "robbery in a holocaust," as he says by the mouth of Isaiah. But one spouse is bound by the marriage contract to keep faith with the other, and he is not his own. He cannot break his faith by any right, and whatever he does with himself is robbery if it be without the other's consent. Why does not one who is burdened with debts follow this same rule and obtain admission to an order, so as to be released from his debts and be free to break his word? O more than blind! Which is greater; the faith commanded by God or a vow devised and chosen by man? Thou art a shepherd of souls, O pope? And ye that teach such things are doctors of sacred theology? Why then do ye teach them? Because, forsooth, ye have decked out your vow as a better work than marriage, and do not exalt faith, which alone exalts all things, but ye exalt works, which are naught in the sight of God, or which are all alike so far as any merit is concerned.[2]

Isa. 61:8

I have no doubt, therefore, that neither men nor angels can grant a dispensation from vows, if they be proper vows. But I am not fully clear in my own mind whether all the things that men nowadays vow come under the head of vows. For instance, it is simply foolish and stupid for

[1] Cf. Köhler, Luther und die KG., pp. 222 ff.
[2] Comp. below, p. 248.

parents to dedicate their children, before birth or in early infancy, to "the religious life," or to perpetual chastity; nay, it is certain that this can by no means be termed a vow. It seems a mockery of God to vow things which it is not at all in one's power to keep. As to the triple vow of the monastic orders, the longer I consider it, the less I comprehend it, and I marvel whence the custom of exacting this vow has arisen. Still less do I understand at what age vows may be taken in order to be legal and valid. I am pleased to find them unanimously agreed that vows taken before the age of puberty are not valid. Nevertheless, they deceive many young children who are ignorant both of their age and of what they are vowing; they do not observe the age of puberty in receiving such children, who after making their profession are held captive and devoured by a troubled conscience, as though they had afterward given their consent. As if a vow which was invalid could afterward become valid with the lapse of time.

It seems absurd to me that the terms of a legal vow should be prescribed to others by those who cannot prescribe them for themselves. Nor do I see why a vow taken at eighteen years of age should be valid, and not one taken at ten or twelve years. It will not do to say that at eighteen a man feels his carnal desires. How is it when he scarcely feels them at twenty or thirty, or when he feels them more keenly at thirty than at twenty? Why do they not also set a certain age-limit for the vows of poverty and obedience? But at what age will you say a man should feel his greed and pride? Even the most spiritual hardly become aware of these emotions. Therefore, no vow will ever become binding and valid until we have become spiritual, and no longer have any need of vows. You see, these are uncertain and perilous matters, and it would therefore be a wholesome counsel to leave such lofty modes of living, unhampered by vows, to the Spirit alone, as they were of old, and by no means to change them into a rule binding for life. But let this suffice for the present concerning baptism

and its liberty; in due time[1] I may treat of the vows at greater length. Of a truth they stand sorely in need of it.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

We come in the third place to the sacrament of penance. On this subject I have already given no little offence by my published treatises and disputations,[2] in which I have amply set forth my views. These I must now briefly rehearse, in order to unmask the tyranny that is rampant here no less than in the sacrament of the bread. For because these two sacraments furnish opportunity for gain and profit, the greed of the shepherds rages in them with incredible zeal against the flock of Christ; although baptism, too, has sadly declined among adults and become the servant of avarice, as we have just seen in our discussion of vows.

The Abuse of Penance

This is the first and chief abuse of this sacrament: They have utterly abolished the sacrament itself, so that there is not a vestige of it left. For they have overthrown both the word of divine promise and our faith, in which this as well as other sacraments consists. They have applied to their tyranny the word of promise which Christ spake in Matthew xvi, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind," etc., in Matthew xviii, "Whatsoever ye shall bind," etc., and in John, the last chapter, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," etc. In these words the faith of penitents is aroused, to the obtaining of remission of sins. But in all their writing, teaching and preaching their sole concern has been, not to teach Christians what is promised in these words or what they ought to believe and what great comfort they might find in them, but only to extend their own tyranny far and wide through force and violence, until

Matt. 16:19
Matt. 18:18
John 20:23

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[1] This time came during Luther's sojourn at the Wartburg, when he wrote De votis monasticis, 1521. See Vol. IV.

[2] The XCV Theses, the Resolutiones, the Sermon von Ablass und Gnade, the Confitendi Ratio; the first and last of these in Vol. I.

it has come to such a pass that some of them have begun to command the very angels in heaven[1] and to boast in incredible mad wickedness of having in these words obtained the right to a heavenly and an earthly rule, and of possessing the power to bind even in heaven. Thus they say nothing of the saving faith of the people, but babble only of the despotic power of the pontiffs, whereas Christ speaks not at all of power, but only of faith.

For Christ hath not ordained principalities or powers or lordships, but ministries, in the Church; as we learn from
1 Cor. 4:1 the Apostle, who says: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of
Mark 16:16 God." Now when He said: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved," He called forth the faith of those to be baptised, so that by this word of promise a man might be certain of being saved if he believed and was baptised. In that word there is no impartation of any power whatever, but only the institution of the ministry of those who bap-
Matt. 16:19 tise. Similarly, when He says here: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind," etc., He calls forth the faith of the penitent, so that by this word of promise he may be certain of being truly absolved in heaven, if he be absolved and believe. Here there is no mention at all of power, but of the ministry of him that absolves. It is a wonder these blind and overbearing men missed the opportunity of arrogating a despotic power to themselves from the promise of baptism. But if they do not do this in the case of baptism, why should they have presumed to do it in the case of the promise of penance? For in both there is a like ministry, a similar promise, and the same kind of sacrament. So that, if bap-

[1] Reference to a probably spurious bull of Clement VI. In his Grund u. Ursach aller Artikel D. Martin Luthers, so durch röm. Bulle unrechtlich verdammt sind (1521), Luther writes: "Thus it happened in the days of John Hus that the pope commanded the angels of heaven to conduct to heaven the souls of the Roman pilgrims who died en route. Against this dreadful blasphemy and more than devilish presumption Hus raised his voice, and though he lost his life therefor, yet forced the pope to pipe a different tune and in future to refrain from such blasphemy."—Compare KÖHLER, Luther u. die Kirchengeschichte, p. 206. See also above, p. 81.

tism does not belong to Peter alone, it is undeniably a wicked usurpation of power to claim the keys for the pope alone. Again, when Christ says: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Take, drink; this is the chalice in my blood," etc., He calls forth the faith of those who eat, so that through these words their conscience may be strengthened by faith and they may rest assured of receiving the forgiveness of sins, if they have eaten. Here, too, He says nothing of power, but only of a ministry. 1 Cor. 11:24 f.

Thus the promise of baptism remains in some sort, at least to infants; the promise of bread and the cup has been destroyed and made subservient to greed, faith becoming a work and the testament a sacrifice; while the promise of penance has fallen prey to the most oppressive despotism of all and serves to establish a more than temporal rule.

Not content with these things, this Babylon of ours has so completely extinguished faith that it insolently denies its necessity in this sacrament; nay, with the wickedness of Antichrist it calls it heresy if any one should assert its necessity. What more could this tyranny do that it has not done? Verily, by the rivers of Babylon we sit and weep, when we remember thee, O Zion. We hang our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. The Lord curse the barren willows of those streams! Amen. Isa. 5:4 Ps. 137:1, 2

Now let us see what they have put in the place of the promise and the faith which they have blotted out and overthrown. Three parts have they made of penance,—contrition, confession, and satisfaction; yet so as to destroy whatever of good there might be in any of them and to establish here also their covetousness and tyranny.

1. Contrition.

In the first place, they teach that contrition precedes faith in the promise; they hold it much too cheap,[1] making it not a work of faith, but a merit; nay, they do not mention it at all. So deep are they sunk in works and in those instances of Scripture that show how many obtained

[1] Longe viliorem; the Jena Ed., followed by Lemme and Kawerau, reads, longe meliorem.

grace by reason of their contrition and humility of heart; but they take no account of the faith which wrought such contrition and sorrow of heart, as it is written of the men
Jonah 3:5 of Nineveh in Jonah iii, "And the men of Nineveh believed in God: and they proclaimed a fast," etc. Others, again, more bold and wicked, have invented a so-called "attrition," which is converted into contrition by virtue of the power of the keys, of which they know nothing.[1] This attrition they grant to the wicked and unbelieving and thus abolish contrition altogether. O the intolerable wrath of God, that such things should be taught in the Church of Christ! Thus, with both faith and its work destroyed, we go on secure in the doctrines and opinions of men—yea, we go on to our destruction. A contrite heart is a precious thing, but it is found only where there is a lively faith in the promises and the threats of God. Such faith, intent on the immutable truth of God, startles and terrifies the conscience and thus renders it contrite, and afterwards, when it is contrite, raises it up, consoles and preserves it; so that the truth of God's threatening is the cause of contrition, and the truth of His promise the cause of consolation, if it be believed. By such faith a man merits the forgiveness of sins. Therefore faith should be taught and aroused before all else; and when faith is obtained, contrition and consolation will follow inevitably and of themselves.

Therefore, although there is something of truth in their teaching that contrition is to be attained by what they call the recollection and contemplation of sins, yet their teaching is perilous and perverse so long as they do not teach first of all the beginning and cause of contrition,—the immutable truth of God's threatening and promise, to the awakening of faith,—so that men may learn to pay more heed to the truth of God, whereby they are cast down and lifted up, than to the multitude of their sins, which will rather irritate and increase the sinful desires than lead to contrition, if they be regarded apart from the truth of God.

[1] Comp. Vol. I, p. 20.

I will say nothing now of the intolerable burden they have bound upon us with their demand that we should frame a contrition for every sin. That is impossible; we can know only the smaller part of our sins, and even our good works are found to be sins, according to Psalm cxliii, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." It is enough to lament the sins which at the present moment distress our conscience, as well as those which we can readily call to mind. Whoever is in this frame of mind is without doubt ready to grieve and fear for all his sins, and will do so whenever they are brought to his knowledge in the future. Ps. 143:2

Beware, then, of putting your trust in your own contrition and of ascribing the forgiveness of sins to your own sorrow. God does not have respect to you because of that, but because of the faith by which you have believed His threatenings and promises, and which wrought such sorrow within you. Thus we owe whatever of good there may be in our penance, not to our scrupulous enumeration of sins, but to the truth of God and to our faith. All other things are the works and fruits of this, which follow of their own accord, and do not make a man good, but are done by a man already made good through faith in the truth of God. Even so, "a smoke goeth up in His wrath, because He is angry and troubleth the mountains and kindleth them," as it is said in Psalm xviii. First comes the terror of His threatening, which burns up the wicked, then faith, accepting this, sends up the cloud of contrition, etc. Ps. 18:8

2. Confession

Contrition, however, is less exposed to tyranny and gain than wholly given over to wickedness and pestilent teaching. But confession and satisfaction have become the chief workshop of greed and violence. Let us first take up confession. There is no doubt that confession is necessary and commanded of God. Thus we read in Matthew iii: "They were baptised of John in Jordan, confessing their sins." And in 1 John i: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and Matt. 3:6 1 John 1:9 f.

just to forgive us our sins. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." If the saints may not deny their sin, how much more ought those who are guilty of open and great sins[1] to make confession! But most effectively of all does Matthew xviii prove the institution of confession, in which passage Christ teaches that a sinning brother should be rebuked, haled before the Church, accused and, if he will not hear, excommunicated. But he hears when, heeding the rebuke, he acknowledges and confesses his sin.

Matt. 18:15

Private Confession

Of private confession, which is now observed, I am heartily in favor, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures; it is useful and necessary, nor would I have it abolished—nay, I rejoice that it exists in the Church of Christ, for it is a cure without an equal for distressed consciences. For when we have laid bare our conscience to our brother and privately made known to him the evil that lurked within, we receive from our brother's lips the word of comfort spoken by God Himself; and, if we accept it in faith, we find peace in the mercy of God speaking to us through our brother. This alone do I abominate,—that this confession has been subjected to the despotism and extortion of the pontiffs. They reserve[2] to themselves even hidden sins, and command that they be made known to confessors named by them, only to trouble the consciences of men. They merely play the pontiff, while they utterly despise the true duties of pontiffs, which are to preach the Gospel and to care for the poor. Yea, the godless despots leave the great sins to the plain priests, and reserve to themselves those sins only which are of less consequence, such as those ridiculous and fictitious things in the bull C o e n a d o m i n i .[3] Nay, to make the wickedness of their error the more apparent, they not only do not reserve, but actually teach and approve, the sins against the service of God,

"Reserved Cases"

[1] Comp. Vol. I, p. 86.
[2] See above, pp. 105 f.
[3] See above, p. 105, note 4.

against faith and the chief commandments; such as their running on pilgrimages, the perverse worship of the saints, the lying saints' legends, the various forms of trust in works and ceremonies, and the practicing of them, by all of which faith in God is extinguished and idolatry encouraged, as we see in our day. We have the same kind of priests to-day as Jereboam ordained of old in Dan and Beersheba,— ministers of the golden calves, men who are ignorant of the law of God, of faith and of whatever pertains to the feeding of Christ's sheep, and who inculcate in the people nothing but their own inventions with terror and violence. 1 Kings 12:26 ff.

Although my advice is that we bear this outrage of reserved cases, even as Christ bids us bear all the tyranny of men, and teaches us that we must obey these extortioners; nevertheless I deny that they have the right to make such reservations, nor do I believe they can bring one jot or tittle of proof that they have it. But I am going to prove the contrary. In the first place, Christ, speaking in Matthew xviii of open sins, says that if our brother shall hear us when we rebuke him, we have saved the soul of our brother, and that he is to be brought before the Church only if he refuse to hear us; so that his sin may be corrected among brethren. How much n will it be true of hidden sins, that they are forgiven if one brother freely makes confession to another? So that it is not necessary to tell it to the Church, that is, as these babblers interpret it, the prelate or priest. We have another proof of this in Christ's words in the same chapter: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." For this is said to each and every Christian. Again, He says in the same place: "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever that they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven." Now, the brother who lays his hidden sins before his brother and craves pardon, certainly consents with his brother upon earth in the truth, which is Christ. Of which Matt. 18:15 ff. Matt. 18:18 Matt. 18:19

Christ says yet more clearly, confirming His preceding words: "Verily I say unto you, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20

Hence, I have no doubt but that every one is absolved from his hidden sins when he has made confession, either of his own accord or after being rebuked, has sought pardon and amended his ways, privately before any brother, however much the violence of the pontiffs may rage against it; for Christ has given to every one of His believers the power to absolve even open sins. Add yet this little point: If any reservation of hidden sins were valid, so that one could not be saved unless they were forgiven, then a man's salvation would be prevented most of all by those aforementioned good works and idolatries, which are nowadays taught by the popes. But if these most grievous sins do not prevent one's salvation, how foolish it is to reserve those lighter sins! Verily, it is the foolishness and blindness of the pastors that produce these monstrous things in the Church. Therefore I would admonish these princes of Babylon and bishops of Bethaven to refrain from reserving any cases whatsoever. Let them, moreover, permit all brothers and sisters freely to hear the confession of hidden sins, so that the sinner may make his sins known to whomever he will and seek pardon and comfort, that is, the word of Christ, by the mouth of his neighbor. For with these presumptions of theirs they only ensnare the consciences of the weak without necessity, establish their wicked despotism, and fatten their avarice on the sins and ruin of their brethren. Thus they stain their hands with the blood of souls, sons are devoured by their parents, Ephraim devours Juda, and Syria Israel with open mouth, as Isaiah saith. Hosea 4:15; 10:5 Isa. 9:20

"Circumstances" To these evils they have added the "circumstances,"[1] and also the mothers, daughters, sisters, brothers- and sisters-in-law, branches and fruits of sins; since, forsooth,

[1] See above, p. 223, note 1.

astute and idle men have worked out a kind of family tree of relationships and affinities even among sins—so prolific is wickedness coupled with ignorance. For this conceit, whatever rogue be its author, has like many another become a public law. Thus do the shepherds keep watch over the Church of Christ; whatever new work or superstition those stupid devotees may have dreamed of, they straightway drag to the light of day, deck out with indulgences and safeguard with bulls; so far are they from suppressing it and preserving to God's people the true faith and liberty. For what has our liberty to do with the tyranny of Babylon? My advice would be to ignore all circumstances utterly. With Christians there is only one circumstance,—that a brother has sinned. For there is no person to be compared with a Christian brother. And the observance of places, times, days, persons, and all other superstitious moonshine, only magnifies the things that are nothing, to the injury of those which are everything; as if aught could be greater or of more importance than the glory of Christian brotherhood! Thus they bind us to places, days and persons, that the name of brother may be lightly esteemed, and we may serve in bondage instead of being free—we to whom all days, places, persons, and all external things are one and the same.

3. Satisfaction

How unworthily they have dealt with satisfaction, I have abundantly shown in the controversies concerning indulgences.[1] They have grossly abused it, to the ruin of Christians in body and soul. To begin with, they taught it in such a manner that the people never learned what satisfaction really is, namely, the renewal of a man's life. Then, they so continually harp on it and emphasize its necessity, that they leave no room for faith in Christ. With these scruples they torture poor consciences to death, and one runs to Rome, one to this place, another to that, this

[1] See above, p. 245, note 2.

one to Chartreuse, that one to some other place, one scourges himself with rods, another ruins his body with fasts and vigils, and all cry with the same mad zeal, "Lo here is Christ! lo there!" believing that the kingdom of heaven, which is within us, will come with observation.[1]

Luke 17:20 f.

For these monstrous things we are indebted to thee, O Roman See, and thy murderous laws and ceremonies, with which thou hast corrupted all mankind, so that they think by works to make satisfaction for sin to God, Who can be satisfied only by the faith of a contrite heart! This faith thou not only keepest silent with this uproar of thine, but even oppressest, only so thy insatiable horseleech have those to whom it may say, "Bring, bring!" and may traffic in sins.

Prov. 30:15

Some have gone even farther and have constructed those instruments for driving souls to despair,—their decrees that the penitent must rehearse all sins anew for which he neglected to make the imposed satisfaction. Yea, what would not they venture to do, who were born for the sole purpose of carrying all things into a tenfold captivity? Moreover, how many are possessed with the notion that they are in a saved state and are making satisfaction for their sins, if they but mumble over, word for word, the prayers the priest has imposed, even though they give never a thought meanwhile to amending their life! They believe that their life is changed in the one moment of contrition and confession, and it remains only to make satisfaction for their past sins. How should they know better, when they are not taught otherwise? No thought is given here to the mortifying of the flesh, no value is attached to the example of Christ, Who absolved the woman taken in adultery and said to her, "Go, and sin no more!" thereby laying upon her the cross—the mortifying of her flesh. This perverse error is greatly encouraged by our absolving

John 8:11

[1] A play on the word observantia, which means both observation and observance. A scriptural fling at the Observantines. Comp. above, p. 172, note 4.

sinners before the satisfaction has been completed, so that they are more concerned about completing the satisfaction which lies before them, than they are about contrition, which they suppose to be past and over when they have made confession. Absolution ought rather to follow on the completion of satisfaction, as it did in the ancient Church, with the result that, after completing the work, penitents gave themselves with greater diligence to faith and the living of a new life.

But this must suffice in repetition of what I have more fully said on indulgences, and in general this must suffice for the present concerning the three sacraments, which have been treated, and yet not treated, in so many harmful books, theological as well as juristic. It remains to attempt some discussion of the other sacraments also, lest I seem to have rejected them without cause.

CONFIRMATION

I wonder what could have possessed them to make a sacrament of confirmation out of the laying on of hands, which Christ employed when He blessed young children, and the apostles when they imparted the Holy Spirit, ordained elders and cured the sick, as the Apostle writes to Timothy, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Why have they not also turned the sacrament of the bread into confirmation? For it is written in Acts ix, "And when he had taken meat he was strengthened,"[1] and in Psalm civ, "And that bread may cheer[2] man's heart." Confirmation would thus include three sacraments—the bread, ordination, and confirmation itself. But if everything the apostles did is a sacrament, why have they not rather made preaching a sacrament?

Mark 10:16
Acts 8:17
Acts 19:6
Acts 6:6
Mark 16:18
1 Tim. 5:22
Acts 9:19
Ps. 104:15

I do not say this because I condemn the seven sacraments, but because I deny that they can be proved from the Scriptures. Would to God we had in the Church such a

[1] Luther quotes correctly, confortatus, but thinks confirmatus.
[2] Vulgate: confirmet.

laying on of hands as there was in apostolic times, whether we called it confirmation or healing! But there is nothing left of it now but what we ourselves have invented to adorn the office of the bishops, that they may have at least something to do in the Church. For after they relinquished to their inferiors those arduous sacraments together with the Word, as being too common for themselves,—since, forsooth, whatever the divine Majesty has instituted must needs be despised of men!—it was no more than right that we should discover something easy and not too burdensome for such delicate and great heroes to do, and should by no means entrust it to the lower clergy as something common—for whatever human wisdom has decreed must needs be held in honor among men! Therefore, as are the priests, so let their ministry and duty be. For a bishop who does not
1 Cor. 8:4 preach the Gospel or care for souls, what is he but an idol in the world, having but the name and appearance of a bishop?

But we seek, instead of this, sacraments that have been divinely instituted, among which we see no reason for numbering confirmation. For, in order that there be a sacrament, there is required above all things a word of divine promise, whereby faith may be trained. But we read nowhere that Christ ever gave a promise concerning confirmation, although He laid hands on many and included
Mark 16:18 the laying on of hands among the signs in Mark xvi: "They shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Yet no one referred this to a sacrament, nor can this be done. Hence it is sufficient to regard confirmation as a certain churchly rite or sacramental ceremony, similar to other ceremonies, such as the blessing of holy water and
1 Tim. 4:4 f. the like. For if every other creature is sanctified by the word and by prayer, why should not much rather man be sanctified by the same means? Still, these things cannot be called sacraments of faith, because there is no divine promise connected with them, neither do they save; but sacraments do save those who believe the divine promise.

MARRIAGE

Not only is marriage regarded as a sacrament without the least warrant of Scripture, but the very traditions which extol it as a sacrament have turned it into a farce. Let me explain.

Marriage not a Sacrament

We said[1] that there is in every sacrament a word of divine promise, to be believed by whoever receives the sign, and that the sign alone cannot be a sacrament. Now we read nowhere that the man who marries a wife receives any grace of God. Nay, there is not even a divinely instituted sign in marriage, for nowhere do we read that marriage was instituted by God to be a sign of anything. To be sure, whatever takes place in a visible manner may be regarded as a type or figure of something invisible; but types and figures are not sacraments in the sense in which we use this term.

Furthermore, since marriage existed from the beginning of the world and is still found among unbelievers, it cannot possibly be called a sacrament of the New Law and the exclusive possession of the Church. The marriages of the ancients were no less sacred than are ours, nor are those of unbelievers less true marriages than those of believers, and yet they are not regarded as sacraments. Besides, there are even among believers married folk who are wicked and worse than any heathen; why should marriage be called a sacrament in their case and not among the heathen? Or are we going to prate so foolishly of baptism and the Church as to hold that marriage is a sacrament only in the Church, just as some make the mad claim that temporal power exists only in the Church? That is childish and foolish talk, by which we expose our ignorance and our arrogance to the ridicule of unbelievers.

But they will say: The Apostle writes in Ephesians v, "They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament." Surely you are not going to contradict so plain a statement of the Apostle! I reply: This argument, like

Eph. 5:31 f.

[1] Above, pp. 203 f.

the others, betrays great shallowness and a negligent and thoughtless reading of Scripture. Nowhere in Holy Scripture is this word sacrament employed in the meaning to which we are accustomed; it has an entirely different meaning. For wherever it occurs it signifies not the sign of a sacred thing, but a sacred, secret, hidden thing. Thus
1 Cor. 4:1 Paul writes in 1 Corinthians iv, "Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and dispensers of the mysteries[1]—i. e., sacraments—of God." Where we have the word sacrament the Greek text reads mystery, which word our version sometimes translates and sometimes retains in its Greek form. Thus our verse reads in the Greek:
Eph. 5:31 f. "They shall be two in one flesh; this is a great mystery." This explains how they came to find a sacrament of the New Law here—a thing they would never have done if they had read the word mystery, as it is in the Greek.[2]

Thus Christ Himself is called a sacrament in 1 Timothy
1 Tim. 3:16 iii, "And evidently great is the sacrament—i. e., mystery—of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared unto angels, hath been preached unto the Gentiles, is believed by the world, is taken up in glory."[3] Why have they not drawn out of this passage an eighth sacrament of the New Law, since they have the clear authority of Paul? But if they restrained themselves here, where they had a most excellent opportunity to unearth a new sacrament, why are they so wanton in the former passage? It was their ignorance, forsooth, of both words and things; they clung to the mere sound of the words, nay, to their own fancies. For, having once arbitrarily

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[1] Vulgate: sacramenta.

[2] Erasmus edited the first published Greek New Testament in March, 1516 (Basle: John Froben), the Complutensian Polyglot being the first printed edition (1514). Luther used Erasmus' work as soon as it came out, as may be seen in his lectures on Romans, 1515–16 (cf. Ficker, Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief; also Preserved Smith, Luther's Correspondence, etc., I, nos. 21 and 65). In an interesting letter to Luther of Feb. 14, 1519, Froben announces the second edition of Erasmus' New Testament, which Luther used in making his translation. Cf. Smith, op. cit., no. 125.

[3] See above, p. 177.

taken the word sacrament to mean a sign, they straightway, without thought or scruple, made a sign of it every time they came upon it in the Sacred Scriptures. Such new meanings of words and such human customs they have also elsewhere dragged into Holy Writ, and conformed it to their dreams, making anything out of any passage whatsoever. Thus they continually chatter nonsense about the terms: good and evil works, sin, grace, righteousness, virtue, and wellnigh every one of the fundamental words and things. For they employ them all after their own arbitrary judgment, learned from the writings of men, to the detriment both of the truth of God and of our salvation.

Therefore, sacrament, or mystery, in Paul's writings, is that wisdom of the Spirit, hidden in a mystery, as he says in 1 Corinthians ii, which is Christ, Who is for this very reason not known to the princes of this world, wherefore they also crucified Him, and Who still is to them foolishness, an offense, a stone of stumbling, and a sign which is spoken against. The preachers he calls dispensers of these mysteries because they preach Christ, the power and the wisdom of God, yet so that one cannot receive this unless one believe. Therefore, a sacrament is a mystery, or secret thing, which is set forth in words and is received by the faith of the heart. Such a sacrament is spoken of in the verse before us—"They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament"—which they understand as spoken of marriage, whereas Paul wrote these words of Christ and the Church, and clearly explained his meaning by adding, "But I speak in Christ and in the Church." Ay, how well they agree with Paul! He declares he is setting forth a great sacrament in Christ and the Church, but they set it forth in a man and a woman! If such wantonness be permitted in the Sacred Scriptures, it is small wonder if one find there anything one please, even a hundred sacraments.

1 Cor. 2:7 ff.
1 Cor. 1:23
Rom. 9:33
Luke 2:34
1 Cor. 1:23 f.; 4:1
Eph. 5:31 f.

Christ and the Church are, therefore, a mystery, that

is, a great and secret thing, which it was possible and proper[1] to represent by marriage as by a certain outward allegory, but that was no reason for their calling marriage a sacrament. The heavens are a type of the apostles, as Psalm xix declares; the sun is a type of Christ; the waters, of the peoples; but that does not make those things sacraments, for in every case there are lacking both the divine institution and the divine promise, which constitute a sacrament. Hence Paul, in Ephesians v, following his own mind,[2] applies to Christ these words in Genesis ii about marriage, or else, following the general view,[2] he teaches that the spiritual marriage of Christ is also contained therein, saying: "As Christ cherisheth the Church: because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament; I speak in Christ and in the Church." You see, he would have the whole passage apply to Christ, and is at pains to admonish the reader to find the sacrament in Christ and the Church, and not in marriage.[3]

Ps. 19:1 ff.

Eph. 5:29 ff.

Therefore we grant that marriage is a type of Christ and the Church, and a sacrament, yet not divinely in-

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[1] Namely, for Paul.

[2] The precise meaning is not clear. The Latin is: vel proprio spiritu vel generali sententia.

[3] Here follows a passage that clearly breaks into the context and belongs elsewhere. See Introduction, p. 169.

"I admit that the sacrament of penance existed also in the Old Law, yea, from the beginning of the world. But the new promise of penance and the gift of the keys are peculiar to the New Law. For as we now have baptism instead of circumcision, so we have the keys instead of the sacrifices and other signs of penance. We said above that the same God at divers times gave divers promises and signs for the remission of sins and the salvation of men, but that all nevertheless received the same grace. Thus it is said in II Corinthians iv, 'Having the same spirit of faith, we also believe, for which cause we speak also'; and in I Corinthians x, 'Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink; and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.' Thus also in Hebrews xi, 'These all died, not receiving the promise; God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us.' For Christ Himself is, yesterday and to-day and forever, the Head of His Church, from the beginning even to the end of the world. Therefore there are divers signs, but the faith of all is the same. Indeed, without faith it is impossible to please God, by which faith even Abel pleased Him (Hebrews xi)."

stituted, but invented by men in the Church, carried away by their ignorance both of the word and of the thing. Which ignorance, since it does not conflict with the faith, is to be charitably borne with, just as many other practices of human weakness and ignorance are borne with in the Church, so long as they do not conflict with the faith and with the Word of God. But we are now dealing with the certainty and purity of the faith and the Scriptures; so that our faith be not exposed to ridicule, when after affirming that a certain thing is contained in the Sacred Scriptures and in the articles of our faith, we are refuted and shown that it is not contained therein, and, being found ignorant of our own affairs, become a stumbling-block to our opponents and to the weak; nay, that we destroy not the authority of the Holy Scriptures. For those things which have been delivered to us by God in the Sacred Scriptures must be sharply distinguished from those that have been invented by men in the Church, it matters not how eminent they be for saintliness and scholarship.

Hindrances to Marriage

So far concerning marriage itself. But what shall we say of the wicked laws of men by which this divinely ordained manner of life is ensnared and tossed to and fro? Good God! it is dreadful to contemplate the audacity of the Roman despots, who wantonly tear marriages asunder and again force them together. Prithee, is mankind given over to the wantonness of these men, for them to mock and in every way abuse and make of them whatever they please, for filthy lucre's sake?

There is circulating far and wide and enjoying a great reputation, a book whose contents have been poured together out of the cesspool of all human traditions, and whose title is "The Angelic Sum,[1]" though it ought rather

[1] The Summa angelica of Angelus de Clavassio of Genoa (died about 1495), published 1486, one of the favorite handbooks of casuistry, in which all possible cases of conscience were treated in alphabetical order. Cf. Zeitschrift für Kirchengesch., XXVII, 296 ff. The Summa angelica was among the papal books burned by Luther, together with the bull, December 10, 1520. Cf. Smith, Luther's Correspondence, I, no. 355.

to be "The More than Devilish Sum." Among endless other monstrosities, which are supposed to instruct the confessors, while they most mischievously confuse them, there are enumerated in this book eighteen hindrances to marriage.[1] If you will examine these with the just and unprejudiced eye of faith, you will see that they belong to
1 Tim 4:1 ff. those things which the Apostle foretold: "There shall be those that give heed to spirits of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry." What is forbidding to marry if it is not this—to invent all those hindrances and set those snares, in order to prevent men from marrying or, if they be married, to annul their marriage? Who gave this power to men? Granted that they were holy men and impelled by godly zeal, why should another's holiness disturb my liberty? why should another's zeal take me captive? Let whoever will, be a saint and a zealot, and to his heart's content; only let him not bring harm upon another, and let him not rob me of my liberty!

Yet I am glad that those shameful laws have at length attained to their full measure of glory, which is this: the Romanists of our day have through them become merchants. What is it they sell? The shame of men and women—merchandise, forsooth, most worthy of such merchants, grown altogether filthy and obscene through greed and godlessness. For there is nowadays no hindrance that may not be legalised upon the intercession of mammon, so that these laws of men seem to have sprung into existence for the sole purpose of serving those grasping and robbing Nimrods as snares for taking money and as nets
Matt. 24:15 for catching souls, and in order that that "abomination" might stand "in the holy place," the Church of God, and openly sell to men the shame of either sex, or as the Scriptures say, "shame and nakedness," of which they had previously robbed them by means of their laws. O worthy trade for our pontiffs to ply, instead of the ministry of the
Lev. 18:6 ff.

[1] For a full discussion of the hindrances see article Eherecht, by Sehling, in Prot. Realencyklopädie, V.

Gospel, which in their greed and pride they despise, being delivered up to a reprobate sense with utter shame and infamy. Rom. 1:28

But what shall I say or do? If I enter into details, the treatise will grow to inordinate length, for everything is in such dire confusion one does not know where to begin, whither to go on, or where to leave off. I know that no state is well governed by means of laws. If the magistrate be wise, he will rule more prosperously by natural bent than by laws. If he be not wise, he will but further the evil by means of laws; for he will not know what use to make of the laws nor how to adapt them to the individual case. More stress ought, therefore, to be laid, in civil affairs, on putting good and wise men in office than on making laws; for such men will themselves be the very best laws, and will judge every variety of case with lively justice. And if there be knowledge of the divine law combined with natural wisdom, then written laws will be entirely superfluous and harmful. Above all, love needs no laws whatever.[1]

Nevertheless I will say and do what I can. I admonish and pray all priests and brethren,[2] when they encounter any hindrance from which the pope can grant dispensation and which is not expressly contained in the Scriptures, by all means to confirm[3] any marriage that may have been contracted[4] in any way contrary to the ecclesiastical or pontifical laws. But let them arm themselves with the divine law, which says, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Matt. 19:6 For the joining together of a man and a woman is of divine law and is binding, however it may conflict with the laws of men; the laws of men must give way before it without hesitation. For if a man leaves father

[1] On this whole paragraph compare Vol. I, p. 294.

[2] It is to be borne in mind that all that follows is in the nature of advice to confessors in dealing with difficult cases of conscience, and is parallel to the closing paragraphs of the section on The Sacrament of the Bread.

[3] Namely, by officiating at the marriage ceremony.

[4] Namely, by betrothal (sponsalia de praesenti).

and mother and cleaves to his wife, how much more will he tread underfoot the silly and wicked laws of men,[1] in order to cleave to his wife! And if pope, bishop or official[2] annul any marriage because it was contracted contrary to the laws of men, he is antichrist, he does violence to nature, and is guilty of lese-majesty toward God, because this word stands,—"What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Matt. 19:6

Besides this, no man had the right to frame such laws, and Christ has granted to Christians a liberty which is above all laws of men, especially where a law of God conflicts with them. Thus it is said in Mark ii, "The Son of man is lord also of the sabbath," and, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." Moreover, such laws were condemned beforehand by Paul, when he foretold that there would be men forbidding to marry. Here, therefore, those cruel hindrances arising from affinity, spiritual or legal relationship,[3] and consanguinity must give way, so far as the Scriptures permit, in which the second degree of consanguinity alone is prohibited. Thus it is written in Leviticus xviii, in which chapter there are twelve persons a man is prohibited from marrying; namely, his mother, his mother-in-law, his full sister, his half-sister by either parent, his granddaughter, his father's or mother's sister, his daughter-in-law, his brother's wife, his wife's sister, his stepdaughter, and his uncle's wife. Here only the first degree of affinity and the second degree of consanguinity are forbidden; yet not without exception, as will appear on closer examination, for the brother's or sister's daughter, or the niece, is not included in the prohibition, although she is in the second degree. Therefore, if a marriage has been contracted outside of these degrees, it should by no means be annulled on account of the laws of men, since it is no-

Mark 2:28

Mark 2:27

1 Tim 4:3

Lev. 18:6 ff.

[1] Lemme pertinently reminds the reader that by "laws of men" Luther here understands the man-made laws of the Church of Rome.

[2] See above, p. 103, note 2.

[3] Relationship arising from sponsorship and legal adoption. Cf. above, p. 128.

where written in the Bible that any other degrees were prohibited by God. Marriage itself, as of divine institution, is incomparably superior to any laws; so that marriage should not be annulled for the sake of the laws, rather should the laws be broken for the sake of marriage.

That nonsense about conpaternities, conmaternities, confraternities, consororities, and confilieties must therefore be altogether abolished, when a marriage has been contracted. What was it but the superstition of men that invented those spiritual relationships?[1] If one may not marry the person one has baptised or stood sponsor for, what right has any Christian to marry any other Christian? Is the relationship that grows out of the external rite, or the sign, of the sacrament more intimate that that which grows out of the blessing[2] of the sacrament itself? Is not a Christian man brother to a Christian woman, and is not she his sister? Is not a baptised man the spiritual brother of a baptised woman? How foolish we are! If a man instruct his wife in the Gospel and in faith in Christ and thus become truly her father in Christ, would it not be right for her to remain his wife? Would not Paul have had the right to marry a maiden out of the Corinthian congregation, of whom he boasts that he has begotton them all in Christ? Lo, thus has Christian liberty been suppressed through the blindness of human superstition. 1 Cor. 4:15

There is even less in the legal relationship,[3] and yet they have set it above the divine right of marriage. Nor would I recognise that hindrance which they term "disparity of religion,"[4] and which forbids one to marry any unbaptised person, even on condition that she become converted to the faith. Who made this prohibition? God or man? Who gave to men the power to prohibit such a marriage? The spirits, forsooth, that speak lies in hypocrisy, as Paul says. 1 Tim. 4:1

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[1] Cognatio spiritualis.
[2] The res sacramenti. See above, p. 182.
[3] Cognatio legalis.
[4] Disparilitas religionis.

Ps. 119:85 Of them it must be said: "The wicked have told me fables; but not as thy law." The heathen Patricius married the Christian Monica, the mother of St. Augustine; why should not the same be permitted nowadays?

The same stupid, nay, wicked cruelty is seen in "the hindrance of crime,"[1]—as when a man has married a woman with whom he had lived in adultery, or when he plotted to bring about the death of a woman's husband in order to be able to wed the widow. I pray you, whence comes this cruelty of man toward man, which even God never demanded? Do they pretend not to know that Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was wed by David, a most saintly man, after the double crime of adultery and murder? If the divine law did this, what do these despotic men to their fellowservants?

Another hindrance is that which they call "the hindrance of a tie,"[2]—as when a man is bound by being betrothed to another woman. Here they decide that, if he has had carnal knowledge of the second, the betrothal with the first becomes null and void. This I do not understand at all. I hold that he who has betrothed himself to one woman belongs no longer to himself, and because of this fact, by the prohibition of the divine law, he belongs to the first, though he has not known her, even if he has known the second. For it was not in his power to give the latter what was no longer his own; he deceived her and actually committed adultery. But they regard the matter differently because they pay more heed to the carnal union than to the divine command, according to which the man, having plighted his troth to the first, is bound to keep it for ever. For whoever would give anything must give of that which 1 Thess. 4:6 is his own. And God forbids a man to overreach or circumvent his brother in any matter. This prohibition must be kept, over and above all the traditions of all men. Therefore, the man in the above case cannot with a good

[1] Impedimentum criminis.
[2] Impedimentum ligaminis.

conscience live in marriage with the second woman, and this hindrance should be completely overthrown. For if a monastic vow make a man to be no longer his own, why does not a promise of betrothal given and received do the same?—since this[1] is one of the precepts and fruits of the Spirit (Galatians v), while a monastic vow is of human invention. And if a wife may claim her husband despite the fact that he has taken a monastic vow, why may not a bride claim her betrothed, even though he has known another? But we said above[2] that he who has plighted his troth to a maiden ought not to take a monastic vow, but is in duty bound to keep faith with her, which faith he cannot break for any tradition of men, because it is commanded by God. Much more should the man here keep faith with his first bride, since he could not plight his troth to a second save with a lying heart, and therefore did not really plight it, but deceived her, his neighbor, against God's command. Therefore, the "hindrance of error"[3] enters in here, by which his marriage to the second woman is rendered null and void.

Gal. 5:22 f. Eph. 5:9

The "hindrance of ordination"[4] also is a lying invention of men, especially since they prate that even a contracted marriage is annulled by it. Thus they constantly exalt their traditions above the commands of God. I do not indeed sit in judgment on the present state of the priestly order, but I observe that Paul charges a bishop to be the husband of one wife; hence no marriage of deacon, priest, bishop or any other order can be annulled,—although it is true that Paul knew nothing of this species of priests, and of the orders that we have to-day. Perish those cursed human traditions, which have crept into the Church only to multiply perils, sins and evils! There exists, therefore,

1 Tim. 3:2

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[1] The fides data et accepta, which Luther finds in the fides (faith) of Gal. 5 : 22

[2] Page 243.

[3] Impedimentum erroris. With fine sarcasm Luther here plays off one hindrance against another.

[4] Impedimentum ordinis.

between a priest and his wife a true and indissoluble marriage, approved by the divine commandment. But what if wicked men in sheer despotism prohibit or annul it? So be it! Let it be wrong among men; it is nevertheless right before God, Whose command must needs take precedence if it conflicts with the commands of men.

An equally lying invention is that "hindrance of public decency,"[1] by which contracted marriages are annulled. I am incensed at that barefaced wickedness which is so ready to put asunder what God hath joined together that one may well scent antichrist in it, for it opposes all that Christ has done and taught. What earthly reason is there for holding that no relative of a deceased husband, even to the fourth degree, may marry the latter's widow? That is not a judgment[2] of public decency, but ignorance[2] of public decency. Why was not this judgment of public decency found among the people of Israel, who were endowed with the best laws, the laws of God? On the contrary, the next of kin was even compelled by the law of God to marry the widow of his relative. Must the people of Christian liberty be burdened with severer laws than the people of legal bondage? But, to make an end of these figments, rather than hindrances—thus far there seem to me to be no hindrances that may justly annul a contracted marriage save these: impotence of the husband, ignorance of a previously contracted marriage, and a vow of chastity. Still, concerning the last, I am to this day so far from certain that I do not know at what age such a vow is to be regarded as binding; as I also said above in discussing the sacrament of baptism.[3] Thus you may learn, from this one question of marriage, how wretchedly and desperately all the activities of the Church have been confused, hindered, ensnared, and subjected to danger through the pestilent, ignorant and wicked traditions of men, so that there is no hope of better-

Deut. 25:5

[1] Impedimentum publicae honestatis.
[2] An untranslatable pun: non iustitia sed inscitia.
[3] Page 244.

ment unless we abolish at one stroke all the laws of all men, restore the Gospel of liberty, and by it judge and rule all things. Amen.

Impotence

We have to speak, then, of sexual impotence, that we may the more readily advise the souls that are in peril.[1] But first I wish to state that what I have said of hindrances is intended to apply after a marriage has been contracted; no marriage should be annulled by any such hindrance. But as to marriages which are to be contracted, I would briefly repeat what I said above.[2] Under the stress of youthful passion or of any other necessity for which the pope grants dispensation, any brother may grant a dispensation to another or even to himself, and following that counsel snatch his wife out of the power of the tyrannical laws as best he can. For with what right am I deprived of my liberty by another's superstition and ignorance? If the pope grants a dispensation for money, why should not I, for my soul's salvation, grant a dispensation to myself or to my brother? Does the pope set up laws? Let him set them up for himself, and keep hands off my liberty; else I will take it by stealth! Now let us discuss the matter of impotence.

Take the following case. A woman, wed to an impotent man, is unable to prove her husband's impotence before court, or perhaps she is unwilling to do so with the mass of evidence and all the notoriety which the law demands; yet she is desirous of having children or is unable to remain continent. Now suppose I had counseled her to demand a divorce from her husband in order to marry another, satisfied that her own and her husband's conscience and their experience were ample testimony of his impotence; but the husband refused his consent to this. Then suppose I should further counsel her, with the consent of the man (who is not really her husband, but merely a dweller under the same roof with her), to give herself to

[1] See p. 263, note 2.
[2] Page 242.

another, say her husband's brother, but to keep this marriage secret and to ascribe the children to the so-called putative father. The question is: Is such a woman in a saved state? I answer, Certainly. Because in this case the error and ignorance of the man's impotence are a hindrance to the marriage; the tyranny of the laws permits no divorce; the woman is free through the divine law, and cannot be compelled to remain continent. Therefore the man ought to yield her this right, and let another man have her as wife whom he has only in outward appearance.

Moreover, if the man will not give his consent, or agree to this division,—rather than allow the woman to burn or to commit adultery, I should counsel her to contract a marriage with another and flee to distant parts unknown. What other counsel could be given to one constantly in danger from lust? Now I know that some are troubled by the fact that then the children of this secret marriage are not the rightful heirs of their putative father. But if it was done with the consent of the husband, then the children will be the rightful heirs. If, however, it was done without his knowledge or against his will, then let unbiased Christian reason, nay, let Christian charity, decide which of the two has done the greater injury to the other. The wife alienates the inheritance, but the husband has deceived his wife and is completely defrauding her of her body and her life. Is not the sin of the man who wastes his wife's body and life a greater sin than that of the woman who merely alienates the temporal goods of her husband? Let him, therefore, agree to a divorce, or else be satisfied with strange heirs; for by his own fault he deceived the innocence of a maiden and defrauded her of the proper use of her body, besides giving her a wellnigh irresistible opportunity to commit adultery. Let both be weighed in the same scales. Certainly, by every right, deceit should fall back on the deceiver, and whoever has done an injury must make it good. What is the difference between such a husband and the man who holds another's wife captive together with her husband?

Is not such a tyrant compelled to support wife and children and husband, or else to set them free? Why should not the same hold here? Therefore I maintain that the man should be compelled either to submit to a divorce or to support the other man's child as his heir. Doubtless this would be the judgment of charity. In that case, the impotent man, who is not really the husband, should support the heirs of his wife in the same spirit in which he would at great cost wait on his wife if she fell sick or suffered some other ill; for it is by his fault and not by his wife's that she suffers this ill. This have I set forth to the best of my ability, for the strengthening of anxious consciences, being desirous to bring my afflicted brethren in this captivity what little comfort I can.[1]

Divorce

As to divorce, it is still a moot question whether it be allowable. For my part I so greatly detest divorce that I should prefer bigamy to it,[2] but whether it be allowable, I do not venture to decide. Christ Himself, the Chief Pastor,[3] says in Matthew v, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting for the cause of fornication, maketh her commit adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery." Christ, then, permits divorce, but for the cause of fornication only. The pope must, therefore, be in error whenever he grants a divorce for any other cause, and no one should feel safe who has obtained a dis-

Matt. 5:32

[1] The following points need to be borne in mind in order to a fair evaluation of this much criticized section: (1) What is here given is in the nature of advice to confessors, and the one guiding principle is the relief of souls in peril. (2) It must not be forgotten that Luther wrote the treatise in Latin, and not for the general public. There is without doubt a certain betrayal in turning into the vernacular a passage written in the language of the learned. Yet we have done this, being unwilling to fall under the charge of giving a garbled version. (3) The hindrance Luther is here discussing was one recognized and provided for by the Church of Rome, and the remedy suggested by him was prescribed by the German Volksrecht in many localities. (4) Divorce was absolutely forbidden. (5) Luther's error grew out of an unhistorical interpretation of the Old Testament, and consisted in his undervaluing the importance of the public law. "To make the individual conscience the sole arbiter in matters belonging to public law, leads to dangerous consequences." (See KAWARAU, Berlin Ed., II, 482 f., where references are given.)

[2] As he actually did in the case of Henry VIII and Philip of Hesse.

[3] See above, p. 269, note 1.

pensation by this temerity (not authority) of the pope. Yet it is a still greater wonder to me, why they compel a man to remain unmarried after being separated from his wife, and why they will not permit him to remarry. For if Christ permits divorce for the cause of fornication and compels
1 Cor. 7:9 no one to remain unmarried, and if Paul would rather have one marry than burn, then He certainly seems to permit a man to marry another woman in the stead of the one who has been put away. Would to God this matter were thoroughly threshed out and decided, so that counsel might be given in the infinite perils of those who, without any fault of their own, are nowadays compelled to remain unmarried, that is, of those whose wives or husbands have run away and deserted them, to come back perhaps after ten years, perhaps never. This matter troubles and distresses me; I meet cases of it every day, whether it happen by the special malice of Satan or because of our neglect of the word of God.

I, indeed, who, alone against all, can decide nothing in this matter, would yet greatly desire at least the passage
1 Cor. 7:15 in 1 Corinthians vii to be applied here,—"But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. For a brother or sister is not under servitude in such cases." Here the Apostle gives permission to put away the unbeliever who departs and to set the believing spouse free to marry again. Why should not the same hold true when a believer—that is, a believer in name, but in truth as much an unbeliever as the one Paul speaks of—deserts his wife, especially if he never intends to return? I certainly can see no difference between the two. But I believe that if in the Apostle's day an unbelieving deserter had returned and had become a believer or had promised to live again with his believing wife, he would not have been taken back, but he too would have been given the right to marry again. Nevertheless, in these matters I decide nothing, as I have said,[1] although there is nothing I would rather see decided, since nothing at

[1] Page 271.

present more grievously perplexes me and many more with me. I would have nothing decided here on the mere authority of the pope or the bishops; but if two learned and pious men agreed in the name of Christ and published their opinion in the spirit of Christ, I should prefer their judgment even to such councils as are nowadays assembled, famous only for numbers and authority, not for scholarship and saintliness. Herewith I hang up my harp,[1] until another and a better man shall take up this matter with me.

Matt. 18:19 f.

Ps. 137:2

ORDINATION

Of this sacrament the Church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the church of the pope. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not the least mention of it in the whole New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God that which cannot be proved to have been instituted by God. I do not hold that this rite, which has been observed for so many centuries, should be condemned; but in sacred things I am opposed to the invention of human fictions, nor is it right to give out as divinely instituted what was not divinely instituted, lest we become a laughing-stock to our opponents. We ought to see to it that every article of faith of which we boast be certain, pure, and based on clear passages of Scripture. But that we are utterly unable to do in the case of the sacrament under consideration.

The Church Cannot Institute Sacraments

The Church has no power to make new divine promises, as some prate, who hold that what is decreed by the Church is of no less authority than what is decreed by God, since the Church is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But the Church owes its life to the word of promise through faith, and is nourished and preserved by this same word. That is to say, the promises of God make the Church, not the Church the promise of God. For the Word of God is

[1] An allusion to the fact that what he is writing is a "Prelude." See Introduction, p. 168.

incomparably superior to the Church, and in this Word the Church, being a creature, has nothing to decree, ordain or make, but only to be decreed, ordained and made. For who begets his own parent? Who first brings forth his own maker? This one thing indeed the Church can do—it can distinguish the Word of God from the words of men; as Augustine confesses that he believed the Gospel, moved thereto by the authority of the Church, which proclaimed, this is the Gospel.[1] Not that the Church is, therefore, above the Gospel; if that were true, she would also be above God, in Whom we believe because she proclaims that He is God. But, as Augustine elsewhere says,[2] the truth itself lays hold on the soul and thus renders it able to judge most certainly of all things; but the truth it cannot judge, but is forced to say with unerring certainty that it is the truth. For example, our reason declares with unerring certainty that three and seven are ten, and yet it cannot give a reason why this is true, although it cannot deny that it is true; it is taken captive by the truth and does not so much judge the truth as it is judged by the truth. Thus it is also with the mind of the Church, when under the enlightenment of the Spirit she judges and approves doctrines; she is unable to prove it, and yet is most certain of having it. For as in philosophy no one judges general conceptions, but all are judged by them, so it is in the Church with the mind of the Spirit, that judgeth all things and is judged by none, as the Apostle says. But of this another time.[3]

1 Cor. 2:16

1 Cor. 2:15

Ordination not a Sacrament

Let this then stand fast,—the Church can give no promises of grace; that is the work of God alone. Therefore she cannot institute a sacrament. But even if she could, it yet would not follow that ordination is a sacrament. For who knows which is the Church that has the Spirit? since when such decisions are made there are usually only

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[1] Contra epistolam Manichaei, 5, 6 (Migne, XLII, 176). Cf. below, p. 451.

[2] De trinitate, 9, 6, 10 (Migne, VIII, 966).

[3] See below, pp. 451 ff.

a few bishops or scholars present; it is possible that these may not be really of the Church, and that all may err, as councils have repeatedly erred, particularly the Council of Constance,[1] which fell into the most wicked error of all. Only that which has the approval of the Church universal, and not of the Roman church alone, rests on a trustworthy foundation. I therefore admit that ordination is a certain churchly rite, on a par with many others introduced by the Church Fathers, such as the blessing of vases, houses, vestments, water, salt, candles, herbs, wine, and the like. No one calls any of these a sacrament, nor is there in them any promise. In the same manner, to anoint a man's hands with oil, or to shave his head, and the like, is not to administer a sacrament, since there is no promise given to those things; he is simply prepared, like a vessel or an instrument, for a certain work.

But you will reply: "What do you say to Dionysius,[2] who in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy enumerates six sacraments, among which he also includes orders?" I answer: I am well aware that this is the one writer of antiquity who is cited in support of the seven sacraments, although he omits marriage and thus has only six. We read simply nothing about these "sacraments" in the other Fathers, nor do they ever refer to them as sacraments; for the invention of sacraments is of recent date. Indeed, to speak more boldly, the setting so great store by this Dionysius, whoever he may have been, greatly displeases me, for there is scarce a line of sound scholarship in him. Prithee, by what authority and with what reasons does he establish his hotch-potch about the angels, in his Celestial Hierarchy?—a book over which many curious and superstitious spirits have cudgeled their brains. If one were to read and judge fairly, is not all shaken out of his sleeve

[1] The council that condemned and burned John Hus (1414–1418).

[2] Dionysius Areopagita, the pseudonym (cf. Acts 17 : 54) of the unknown author (about 500, in Syria?) of the neoplatonic writings, Of the Celestial, and Of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, etc.

and very like a dream? But in his Mystic Theology, which certain most ignorant theologians greatly puff, he is downright dangerous, being more of a Platonist than a Christian; so that, if I had my way, no believing mind would give the least attention to these books. So far from learning Christ in them, you will lose even what you know of Him. I know whereof I speak. Let us rather
1 Cor. 2:2 hear Paul, that we may learn Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He is the way, the life and the truth; He is the ladder
John 14:6 by which we come unto the Father, as He saith: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Allegories And in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, what does this Dionysius do but describe certain churchly rites and play round them with his allegories without proving them? just as among us the author of the book entitled Rationale divinorum.[1] Such allegorical studies are the work of idle men. Think you I should find it difficult to play with allegories round anything in creation? Did not Bonaventure[2] by allegory draw the liberal arts into theology? And Gerson even converted the smaller Donatus into a mystic theologian.[3] It would not be a difficult task for me to compose a better hierarchy than that of Dionysius, for he knew nothing of pope, cardinals and archbishops, and put the bishop at the top. Nay, who has so weak a mind as not to be able to launch into allegories? I would not have a theologian give himself to allegorizing until he has perfected himself in the grammatical and literal interpretation of the Scriptures; otherwise his theology will bring him into danger, as Origen discovered.[4]

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[1] William Durandus the elder, died 1296.

[2] The Franciscan Bonaventura (†1274) in his De reductione artium ad theologiam.

[3] Donatus (ab. 350 A.D.), a famous Latin grammarian, whose Ars minor was a favorite mediæval text-book. The chancellor of the University of Paris, John Gerson († 1429), published a Donatus moralisatus seu per allegoriam traductus—a mystical grammar, in which the noun was compared to man, the pronoun to man's sinful state, the verb to the divine command to love, the adverb to the fulfilment of the divine law, etc.

[4] See above, p. 190.

Therefore a thing does not need to be a sacrament simply because Dionysius describes it. Otherwise, why not also make a sacrament of the processions, which he describes in his book, and which continue to this day? There will then be as many sacraments as there have been rites and ceremonies multiplied in the Church. Standing on so unsteady a foundation, they have nevertheless invented "characters"[1] which they attribute to this sacrament of theirs and which are indelibly impressed on those who are ordained. Whence do such ideas come? By what authority, with what reasons, are they established? We do not object to their being free to invent, say and give out whatever they please; but we also insist on our liberty and demand that they shall not arrogate to themselves the right to turn their ideas into articles of faith, as they have hitherto presumed to do. It is enough that we accommodate ourselves to their rites and ceremonies for the sake of peace; but we refuse to be bound by such things as though they were necessary to salvation, when they are not. Let them put by their despotic demands, and we shall yield free obedience to their opinions, and thus live at peace with them. It is a shameful and wicked slavery for a Christian man, who is free, to be subject to any but heavenly and divine traditions.

The Alleged Scriptural Basis of Ordination

We come now to their strongest argument. It is this: Christ said at the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me." Here, they say, Christ ordained the apostles to the priesthood. From this passage they also concluded, among other things, that both kinds are to be administered to the priests alone.[2] In fine, they have drawn out of this passage whatever they pleased, as men who might arrogate to themselves the free will to prove anything whatever from any words of Christ, no matter where found. But is that interpreting the words of God? Pray, answer me! Christ

1 Cor. 11:24

[1] The so-called character indelebilis, the peculiar gift of ordination, so that "once a priest, always a priest." See above, p. 68, note 5.

[2] See above, pp. 178 ff.

gives us no promise here, but only commands that this be done in remembrance of Him. Why do they not conclude that He also ordained priests when He laid upon them the
Mark 16:15 office of the Word and of baptism, saying, "Go ye into all
Matt. 28:19 the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name," etc.? For it is the proper duty of priests to preach and to baptise. Or, since it is nowadays the chief and, as they say, indispensable duty of priests to read the canonical hours,[1] why have they not discovered the sacrament of ordination in those passages in which
Matt. 26:41 Christ, in many places and particularly in the garden, commanded them to pray that they might not enter into temptation? But perhaps they will evade this argument by saying that it is not commanded to p r a y ; it is enough to r e a d the canonical hours. Then it follows that this priestly work can be proved nowhere in the Scriptures, and thus their praying priesthood is not of God, as, indeed, it is not.

But which of the ancient Fathers claimed that in this passage priests were ordained? Whence comes this novel interpretation? I will tell you. They have sought by this device to set up a nursery of implacable discord, whereby clerics and laymen should be separated from each other farther than heaven from earth, to the incredible injury of the grace of baptism and the confusion of our fellowship in the Gospel. Here, indeed, are the roots of that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity; trusting in the external anointing by which their hands are consecrated, in the tonsure and in vestments, they not only exalt themselves above lay Christians, who are only anointed with the Holy Spirit, but regard them almost as dogs and unworthy to be included with them in the Church. Hence they are bold to demand, to exact, to threaten, to urge, to oppress, as much as they please. In short, the sacrament

[1] The stated daily prayers, fixed by canon, of the clergy. The seven hours are respectively: matins (including nocturns and lauds), prime, tierce, sext, nones, vespers, and compline.

of ordination has been and is a most approved device for the establishing of all the horrible things that have been wrought hitherto and will yet be wrought in the Church. Here Christian brotherhood has perished, here shepherds have been turned into wolves, servants into tyrants, churchmen into worse than worldlings.

The Priesthood of All Christians

If they were forced to grant that as many of us as have been baptised are all priests without distinction, as indeed we are, and that to them was committed the ministry only, yet with our consent, they would presently learn that they have no right to rule over us except in so far as we freely concede it. For thus it is written in 1 Peter ii, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a priestly kingdom." Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians.[1] But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us, who do all that they do in our name. And the priesthood is nothing but a ministry, as we learn from 1 Corinthians iv, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."

1 Peter 2:9

1 Cor. 4:1

It follows herefrom that whoever does not preach the Word, called by the Church to this very thing, is no priest at all. And further, that the sacrament of ordination can be nothing else than a certain rite of choosing preachers in the Church. For thus is a priest defined in Malachi ii, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts." You may be certain, then, that whoever is not an angel of the Lord of hosts, or whoever is called to anything else than such angelic service—if I may so term it—is never a priest; as Hosea says, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to me." They are also called

Mal. 2:7

Hosea 4:6

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[1] Comp. above, p. 69. The fullest development of Luther's doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of believers is to be found in his writings against Emser, especially Auf das überchristliche, übergeistliche und überkünstliche Buch Bock Emsers Antwort, 1521.

pastors because they are to pasture, that is, to teach. Therefore, they who are ordained only to read the canonical hours and to offer masses are indeed papist, but not Christian, priests, because they not only do not preach, but are not called to preach; nay, it comes to this, that such a priesthood is a different estate altogether from the office of preaching. Thus they are hour-priests and mass-priests, that is, a sort of living idol, having the name of priest, while they are in reality such priests as Jeroboam ordained, in
1 Kings 12:31 Bethaven, of the off-scouring of the people, and not of the tribe of Levi.[1]

Lo, whither hath the glory of the Church departed! The whole earth is filled with priests, bishops, cardinals and clerics, and yet not one of them preaches by virtue of his office, unless he be called to do so by another and a different call besides his sacramental ordination. Every one thinks he is doing full justice to his sacrament by mumbling the vain repetitions of his prescribed prayers and by celebrating masses; moreover, by never really praying those hours,[2] or if he does pray them, by praying them for himself, and by offering his masses as a sacrifice—which is the height of perversity!—whereas the mass consists in the use of the sacrament. It is clear, therefore, that the ordination which, as a sacrament, makes clerics of this sort of men, is in truth nothing but a mere fiction, devised by men who understand nothing about the Church, the priesthood, the ministry of the Word, or the sacraments. And as is the sacrament, so are the priests it makes. To such errors and such blindness has come a still worse captivity; in order to separate themselves still farther from other Christians, whom they deem profane, they have unmanned themselves, like the priests of Cybele, and taken upon them the burden of a pretended celibacy.

It was not enough for this hypocrisy and error to forbid bigamy, viz., the having of two wives at the same time, as

[1] On the last sentence see above, pp. 251 f.
[2] See p. 278, note 1.

it was forbidden in the law, and as is the accepted meaning of the term; but they have called it bigamy if a man married two virgins, one after the other, or if he married a widow. Nay, so holy is the holiness of this most holy sacrament, that no married man can become a priest as long as his wife lives. And—here we reach the very summit of holiness—even he is prevented from entering the priesthood, who without his knowledge or by an unfortunate chance married a fallen woman. But if one have defiled a thousand harlots, or ravished countless matrons and virgins, or even kept numerous Ganymedes, that would be no hindrance to his becoming bishop or cardinal or pope. Moreover, the Apostle's word, "the husband of one wife," must be interpreted to mean, "the prelate of one church," and this has given rise to the "incompatible benefices."[1] At the same time the pope, that munificent dispenser, may join to one man three, twenty, one hundred wives—I should say churches—if he be bribed with money or power—I should say, moved by godly charity and constrained by the care of the churches. 1 Tim. 3:2

O pontiffs worthy of this holy sacrament of ordination! O princes, not of the catholic churches, but of the synagogues, nay, the black dens, of Satan! I would cry out with Isaiah: "Ye scornful men, who rule over my people that is in Jerusalem"; and with Amos: "Woe to you that are wealthy in Sion, and to you that have confidence in the mountain of Samaria: ye great men, heads of the people, that go in with state into the house of Israel." O the reproach that such monstrous priests bring upon the Church of God! Where are there any bishops or priests who know the Gospel, not to speak of preaching it? Why then do they boast of being priests? Why do they desire to be regarded as holier and better and mightier than other Christians, who are merely laymen? To read the hours—what unlearned men, or, as the Apostle says, what men speaking with tongues, cannot do that? But to p r a y the hours— Rev. 2:9 Isa. 28:14 Amos 6:1 1 Cor. 14:23

[1] See above, p. 92.

that belongs to monks, hermits, and men in private life, all of them laymen. The duty of the priest is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a painted man is a man. Does ordaining such babbling priests make one a bishop? Or blessing churches and bells? Or confirming boys? Certainly not. Any deacon or layman could do as much. The ministry of the Word makes the priest and the bishop.

Therefore my advice is: Flee, all ye that would live in safety; begone, young men, and do not enter upon this holy estate, unless you are determined to preach the Gospel, and are able to believe that you are not made one whit better than the laity through this sacrament of ordination! For to read the hours is nothing, and to offer mass is to receive the sacrament.[1] What then is there left to you that every layman does not have? Tonsure and vestments? A sorry priest, forsooth, who consists of tonsure and vestment! Or the oil poured on your fingers? But every Christian is anointed and sanctified with the oil of the Holy Spirit, both in body and soul, and in ancient times touched the sacrament with his hands no less than the priests do now.[2] But to-day our superstition counts it a great crime if the laity touch either the bare chalice or the corporale;[3] not even a nun who is a pure virgin would be permitted to wash the palls[4] and sacred linens of the altar. O God! how the sacrosanct sanctity of this sacrament of ordination has grown and grown. I anticipate that ere long the laity will not be permitted to touch the altar except when they offer their money. I can scarce contain myself when I contemplate the wicked tyrannies of these desperate men, who with their farcical and childish fancies mock and overthrow the liberty and the glory of the Christian religion.

Let every one, therefore, who knows himself to be a

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[1] See above, p. 280.
[2] See above, p. 185.
[3] See above, p. 213.
[4] Covers for the chalice.

Christian be assured of this, and apply it to himself,— that we are all priests, and there is no difference between us; that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and all the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he be called. And therefore this sacrament of ordination, if it have any meaning at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the Church. Furthermore, the priesthood is properly nothing but the ministry of the Word, mark you, of the Word—not of the law, but of the Gospel. And the diaconate is not the ministry of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but the ministry of distributing the Church's alms to the poor, so that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal matters and may give themselves more freely to prayer and the Word. For this was the purpose of the institution of the diaconate, as we read in Acts vi. Whoever, therefore, does not know or preach the Gospel, is not only not a priest or bishop, but he is a plague of the Church, who under the false title of priest or bishop—in sheep's clothing, forsooth—oppresses the Gospel and plays the wolf in the Church. Therefore, unless those priests and bishops with whom the Church is now filled work out their salvation in some other way, that is, realise that they are not priests or bishops and bemoan the fact that they bear the name of an office whose duties they either do not know or cannot fulfil, and thus with prayers and tears lament their wretched hypocritical life—unless they do this, they are truly the people of eternal perdition, and the words of Isaiah are fulfilled in them: "Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge, and their nobles have perished with famine, and their multitude were dried up with thirst. Therefore hath hell enlarged her soul and opened her mouth without any bounds, and their strong ones, and their people, and their

Ordination, the Rite of Choosing Preachers

Acts 6:4

Isa. 5:13 f.

high and generous ones shall go down into it." What a dreadful word for our age, in which Christians are sucked down into so deep an abyss!

Since, therefore, what we call the priesthood is a ministry, so far as we can learn from the Scriptures, I cannot understand why one who has been made a priest cannot again become a layman; for the sole difference between him and a layman is his ministry. But to depose a man from the ministry is so far from impossible that it is even now the usual penalty imposed upon guilty priests; they are either suspended for a season or permanently deprived of their office. For that lying "indelible character" has long since become a laughing-stock. I admit that the pope imparts this character, but Christ knows nothing of it; and a priest who is consecrated with it becomes thereby the life-long servant and captive, not of Christ, but of the pope; as it is in our day. Moreover, unless I am greatly mistaken, if this sacrament and this lie fall, the papacy itself with its characters will scarcely survive; our joyous liberty will be restored to us; we shall realize that we are all equal by every right, and having cast off the yoke of tyranny, shall know that he who is a Christian has Christ, and that he who has Christ has all things that are Christ's and is able to do all things. Of this I will write more, and more tellingly, as soon as I perceive that the above has displeased my friends the papists.[1]

Phil. 4:13

THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

The Authority of James

To the rite of anointing the sick our theologians have made two additions which are worthy of them; first, they call it a sacrament, and secondly, they make it the last sacrament. So that it is now the sacrament of extreme unction, which may be administered only to such as are at the point of death. Being such subtle dialecticians, perchance they have done this in order to relate it

[1] This promise was fulfilled in the Liberty of a Christian Man.

to the first unction of baptism and the two succeeding unctions of confirmation and ordination. But here they are able to cast in my teeth, that in the case of this sacrament there are, on the authority of James the Apostle, both promise and sign, which, as I have all along maintained, constitute a sacrament. For does not James say: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." There, say they, you have the promise of the forgiveness of sins, and the sign of the oil. James 5:14 f.

But I reply: If ever there was a mad conceit, here is one indeed. I will say nothing of the fact that many assert with much probability that this Epistle is not by James the Apostle,[1] nor worthy of an apostolic spirit, although, whoever be its author, it has come to be esteemed as authoritative. But even if the Apostle James did write it, I yet should say, no Apostle has the right on his own authority to institute a sacrament, that is, to give a divine promise with a sign attached; for this belongs to Christ alone. Thus Paul says that he received from the Lord the sacrament of the Eucharist, and that he was not sent to baptise but to preach the Gospel. And we read nowhere in the Gospel of this sacrament of extreme unction. But let us also waive that point. Let us examine the words of the Apostle, or whoever was the author of the Epistle, and we shall at once see how little heed these multipliers of sacraments have given to them. 1 Cor. 11:23 1 Cor. 1:17

In the first place, then, if they believe the Apostle's words to be true and binding, by what right do they change and contradict them? Why do they make an extreme and a particular kind of unction of that which the Apostle wished **The Unction Not Extreme**

[1] Thus Erasmus: Fieri potest ut nomen commune cum apostolo praebuerit occasionem ut haec epistola Iacobo apostolo ascriberetur, cum fuerit alterius cuiusdam Iacobi.—Moffatt, Introduction to the Lit. of the N. T., p. 472.

to be general? For he did not desire it to be an extreme unction or administered only to the dying; but he says quite generally: "If any man be sick"—not, "If any man be dying." I care not what learned discussions Dionysius has on this point in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy;[1] the Apostle's words are clear enough, on which words he as well as they rely, without, however, following them. It is evident, therefore, that they have arbitrarily and without any authority made a sacrament and an extreme unction out of the misunderstood words of the Apostle, to the detriment of all other sick persons, whom they have deprived of the benefit of the unction which the Apostle enjoined.

The Unction Medicinal

But what follows is still better. The Apostle's promise expressly declares that the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up. The Apostle commands us to anoint the sick man and to pray, in order that he may be healed and raised up; that is, that he may not die, and that it may not be an extreme unction. This is proved also by the prayers which are said, during the anointing, for the recovery of the one who is sick. But they say, on the contrary, that the unction must be administered to none but the dying; that is, that they may not be healed and raised up. If it were not so serious a matter, who could help laughing at this beautiful, apt and sound exposition of the Apostle's words? Is not the folly of the sophists here shown in its true colors? As here, so in many other places, they affirm what the Scriptures deny, and deny what they affirm. Why should we not give thanks to these excellent magisters of ours?[2] I therefore spoke truth when I said they never conceived a crazier notion than this.[3]

Furthermore, if this unction is a sacrament it must necessarily be, as they say, an effective sign[4] of that which

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[1] See above, p. 275.
[2] Comp. above, p. 171.
[3] See above, p. 285.
[4] See above, p. 226.

it signifies and promises. Now it promises health and recovery to the sick, as the words plainly say: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up." But who does not see that this promise is seldom if ever fulfilled? Scarce one in a thousand is restored to health, and when one is restored nobody believes that it came about through the sacrament, but through the working of nature or the medicine; for to the sacrament they ascribe the opposite power. What shall we say then? Either the Apostle lies in making this promise or else this unction is no sacrament. For the sacramental promise is certain; but this promise deceives in the majority of cases. Indeed—and here again we recognize the shrewdness and foresight of these theologians—for this very reason they would have it to be extreme unction, that the promise should not stand; in other words, that the sacrament should be no sacrament. For if it is extreme unction, it does not heal, but gives way to the disease; but if it heals, it cannot be extreme unction. Thus, by the interpretation of these magisters, James is shown to have contradicted himself, and to have instituted a sacrament in order not to institute one; for they must have an extreme unction just to make untrue what the Apostle intends, namely, the healing of the sick. If that is not madness, pray what is?

These people exemplify the word of the Apostle in 1 Timothy i, "Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither the things they say, nor whereof they affirm." 1 Tim. 1:7 Thus they read and follow all things without judgment. With the same thoughtlessness they have also found auricular confession in our Apostle's words,—"Confess your sins one to another." James 5:16 But they do not observe the command of the Apostle, that the priests of the church be called, and prayer be made for the sick. Scarce a single priestling is sent nowadays, although the Apostle would have many present, not because of the unction but of the prayer. Wherefore he says: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man," etc. I have my doubts, however, whether he

Priests and Elders

would have us understand priests when he says presbyters, that is, elders. For one who is an elder is not therefore a priest or minister; so that the suspicion is justified that the Apostle desired the older and graver men in the Church to visit the sick; these should perform a work of mercy and pray in faith and thus heal him. Still it cannot be denied that the ancient churches were ruled by elders, chosen for this purpose, without these ordinations and consecrations, solely on account of their age and their long experience.

Therefore, I take it, this unction is the same as that which

Mark 6:13

the Apostles practised, in Mark vi, "They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." It was a ceremony of the early Church, by which they wrought miracles on the sick, and which has long since ceased; even as Christ,

Mark 16:17

in the last chapter of Mark, gave them that believe the power to take up serpents, to lay hands on the sick, etc. It is a wonder that they have not made sacraments also of these things; for they have the same power and promise as the words of James. Therefore, this extreme—that is, this fictitious—unction is not a sacrament, but a counsel of James, which whoever will may use, and it is derived from Mark vi, as I have shown. I do not believe it was a

Rom. 5:3

counsel given to all sick persons, for the Church's infirmity

Phil. 1:21

is her glory and death is gain; but it was given only to such as might bear their sickness impatiently and with little faith. These the Lord allowed to remain in the Church, in order that miracles and the power of faith might be manifest in them.

Prayer the Chief Part of Unction

For this very contingency James provided with care and foresight by attaching the promise of healing and the forgiveness of sins not to the unction, but to the prayer of faith. For he says: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." A sacrament does not demand prayer or faith on the part of the minister, since even a wicked person may baptise and consecrate without

prayer; a sacrament depends solely on the promise and institution of God, and requires faith on the part of him who receives it. But where is the prayer of faith in our present use of extreme unction? Who prays over the sick one in such faith as not to doubt that he will recover? Such a prayer of faith James here describes, of which he said in the beginning of his Epistle: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." And Christ says of it: "Whatsoever you ask, believe that you shall receive; and it shall be done unto you." James 1:6 Mark 11:24

If such prayer were made, even to-day, over a sick man—that is, prayer made in full faith by older, grave and saintly men—it is beyond all doubt that we could heal as many sick as we would. For what could not faith do? But we neglect this faith, which the authority of the Apostle demands above all else. By presbyters—that is, men pre-eminent by reason of their age and their faith—we understand the common herd of priests. Moreover, we turn the daily or voluntary unction into an extreme unction, and finally, we not only do not effect the result promised by the Apostle, namely, the healing of the sick, but we make it of none effect by striving after the very opposite. And yet we boast that our sacrament, nay, our figment, is established and proved by this saying of the Apostle, which is diametrically opposed to it. What theologians we are!

The Unction and Faith

Now I do not condemn this our sacrament of extreme unction, but I firmly deny that it is what the Apostle James prescribes; for his unction agrees with ours neither in form, use, power nor purpose. Nevertheless we shall number it among those sacraments which we have instituted, such as the blessing and sprinkling of salt and holy water.[1] For we cannot deny that every creature is sanctified by the word and by prayer, as the Apostle Paul teaches us. We do not deny, therefore, that forgiveness of sins and peace are granted through extreme unction; not because it is a sacrament divinely instituted, but because he who receives 1 Tim. 4:4 f.

[1] See above, p. 275.

it believes that these blessings are granted to him. For the faith of the recipient does not err, however much the minister may err. For one who baptises or absolves in jest,[1] that is, does not absolve so far as the minister is concerned, does yet truly absolve and baptise if the person he baptises or absolves believe. How much more will one who administers extreme unction confer peace, even though he does not really confer peace, so far as his ministry is concerned, since there is no sacrament there. The faith of the one anointed receives even that which the minister either could not or did not intend to give; it is sufficient for him to hear and believe the Word. For whatever we believe we shall receive, that we do really receive, it matters not what the minister may do or not do, or whether he dissemble or jest.

Mark 9:23 Matt. 8:13 The saying of Christ stands fast,—"All things are possible to him that believeth," and, "Be it unto thee even as thou hast believed." But in treating the sacraments our sophists say nothing at all of this faith, but only babble with all their

2 Tim. 3:7 might of the virtues of the sacraments themselves—"ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth."

Still it was a good thing that this unction was made extreme unction, for, thanks to that, it has been disturbed and subjected least of all the sacraments by tyranny and greed. This one last mercy, forsooth, has been left to the dying,—they may freely be anointed, even without confession and communion. If it had remained a practice of daily occurrence, especially if it had conferred health on the sick, even without taking away sins, how many worlds would not the pontiffs have under their control to-day? For through the one sacrament of penance and through the power of the keys, as well as through the sacrament of ordination, they have become such mighty emperors and princes. But now it is a fortunate thing that they despise the prayer of faith, and therefore do not heal any sick, and that they have made for themselves, out of an ancient ceremony, a brand-new sacrament.

[1] See above, p. 226.

Let this suffice now for these four sacraments. I know how it will displease those who believe that the number and use of the sacraments are to be learned not from the sacred Scriptures, but from the Roman See. As though the Roman See had given those sacraments and had not rather got them from the lecture halls of the universities, to which it is unquestionably indebted for whatever it has. The papal despotism would not have attained its present position, had it not taken over so many things from the universities. For there was scarce another of the celebrated bishoprics that had so few learned pontiffs; only in violence, intrigue, and superstition has it hitherto surpassed the rest. For the men who occupied the Roman See a thousand years ago differ so vastly from those who have since come into power, that one is compelled to refuse the name of Roman pontiff either to the former or to the latter.

Other Possible Sacraments

There are yet a few other things it might seem possible to regard as sacraments; namely, all those to which a divine promise has been given, such as prayer, the Word, and the cross. Christ promised, in many places, that those who pray should be heard; especially in Luke xi, where He invites us in many parables to pray. Of the Word He says: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." And who will tell how often He promises aid and glory to such as are afflicted, suffer, and are cast down? Nay, who will recount all the promises of God? The whole Scripture is concerned with provoking us to faith; now driving us with precepts and threats, now drawing us with promises and consolations. Indeed, whatever things are written are either precepts or promises; the precepts humble the proud with their demands, the promises exalt the humble with their forgiveness.

Luke 11:5 ff.

Luke 11:28

Baptism and Bread the Only and Sufficient Sacraments

Nevertheless, it has seemed best to restrict the name of sacrament to such promises as have signs attached to them. The remainder, not being bound to signs, are bare promises. Hence there are, strictly speaking, but two sacraments in the Church of God—baptism and bread; for only

in these two do we find both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of forgiveness of sins. The sacrament of penance, which I added to these two,[1] lacks the divinely instituted visible sign, and is, as I have said,[2] nothing but a return to baptism. Nor can the scholastics say that their definition fits penance, for they too ascribe to the sacrament a visible sign, which is to impress upon the senses the form of that which it effects invisibly. But penance, or absolution, has no such sign; wherefore they are constrained by their own definition, either to admit that penance is not a sacrament, and thus to reduce the number of sacraments, or else to bring forward another definition.

Baptism, however, which we have applied to the whole of life, will truly be a sufficient substitute for all the sacraments we might need as long as we live. And the bread is truly the sacrament of the dying; for in it we commemorate the passing of Christ out of this world, that we may imitate Him. Thus we may apportion these two sacraments as follows: baptism belongs to the beginning and the entire course of life, the bread belongs to the end and to death. And the Christian should use them both as long as he is in this poor body, until, fully baptised and strengthened, he passes out of this world and is born unto the new life of eternity, to eat with Christ in the Kingdom of His Father, as He promised at the Last Suppper,—"Amen I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Thus He seems clearly to have instituted the sacrament of the bread with a view to our entrance into the life to come. Then, when the meaning[3] of both sacraments is fulfilled, baptism and bread will cease.

Matt. 26:29

Conclusion

Herewith I conclude this prelude, and freely and gladly offer it to all pious souls who desire to know the genuine sense of the Scriptures and the proper use of the sacra-

[1] See above, p. 177.
[2] See above, pp. 220 f.
[3] The res sacramenti. See above, p. 182, note 2.

ments. For it is a gift of no mean importance, to know the things that are given us, as it is said in 1 Corinthians ii, and what use we ought to make of them. Endowed with this spiritual judgment, we shall not mistakenly rely on that which does not belong here. These two things our theologians never taught us, nay, methinks they took particular pains to conceal them from us. If I have not taught them, I certainly did not conceal them, and have given occasion to others to think out something better. It has at least been my endeavor to set forth these two things. Nevertheless, not all can do all things.[1] To the godless, on the other hand, and those who in obstinate tyranny force on us their own teachings instead of God's, I confidently and freely oppose these pages, utterly indifferent to their senseless fury. Yet I wish even them a sound mind, and do not despise their efforts, but only distinguish them from such as are sound and truly Christian. 1 Cor. 2:12

I hear a rumor of new bulls and papal maledictions sent out against me, in which I am urged to recant or be declared a heretic.[2] If that is true, I desire this book to be a portion of the recantation I shall make; so that these tyrants may not complain of having had their pains for nothing. The remainder I will publish ere long, and it will, please Christ, be such as the Roman See has hitherto neither seen nor heard. I shall give ample proof of my obedience.[3] In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Why doth that impious Herod fear
When told that Christ the King is near?
He takes not earthly realms away,
Who gives the realms that ne'er decay.[4]

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[1] Vergil's Eclogues, VIII, 63.

[2] See Introduction, p. 168.

[3] The remainder of Luther's "recantation" was the De libertate. In the letter to the pope, which accompanied it, he gave ample proof of his obedience.

[4] The eighth stanza of Coelius Sedulius' Hymnus acrostichis totam vitam Christi continens (beginning, A solis ortus cardine), of the fifth century. Stanzas 8, 9, 11 and 13 were used as an Epiphany hymn, which Luther translated on December 12, 1541,—"Was fürchtst du, Feind Herodes, sehr." The above translation is taken from Hymns Ancient and Modern, No. 60.

A TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

WITH

A LETTER TO POPE LEO X

1520

INTRODUCTION

The Letter to the Pope, like an earlier letter dated March 3, 1519, was written at the suggestion of Carl von Miltitz. Sent to Germany to bring Luther to Rome, this German diplomat knew German conditions and to some extent sympathized with Luther's denunciation of Tetzel and the sellers of indulgences. He preferred, therefore, to try to settle the controversy and to leave Luther in Germany. Although the pope insisted that Luther must come to Rome and recant, Miltitz arranged for a hearing of the case before a German bishop. Evidently Miltitz was far too optimistic in his representations both to Luther and to the pope. The pope, in a writing dated March 29, 1519, spoke in friendly terms to Luther, and urged him to come to Rome immediately and to make his recantation there. Luther, in the letter dated March 3, 1519, writes in most humble language to the pope, but declares it impossible for him to recant what he had written in the XCV Theses. The pope's letter did not reach Luther; Luther's letter was not forwarded to the pope.

Luther had promised to keep silent if his opponents would do the same, and had devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures. John Eck, however, had no such occupation to keep him from controversy, and Luther was not averse to a debate. At the Leipzig disputation, June 27–July 15, 1519, Luther learned more of the logical implications of his position. The plan of Miltitz had failed, but he would not be discouraged.

When Miltitz went to Germany, it was under the pretence of a mission "to deliver to his elector the papal golden rose, which the latter had coveted in vain for two years."[1] Now he decided to go in person to Augsburg, where it had been deposited with the Fuggers, and present it to Frederick. This also gave an opportunity for a second meeting with Luther at Liebwierde, October 9, 1519. Luther, although placing little confidence in Miltitz, consented to argue his case before the archbishop of Treves. The plan failed, partly because there was no citation for Luther to appear, partly because the Elector would not allow Luther to go without proper safe-conduct, and partly because Miltitz had not tried to prevent Luther's opponents from challenging him.

In spite of the evident lack of confidence on both sides, and in spite of Luther's constant progress in opposition to the Roman Church, Miltitz insisted that "the case is not as black as we priests make it," even when a

[1] Catholic Encyclopedia, x, 318.

papal bull was issued against Luther on June 15, 1520. On August 28th Miltitz attended a meeting of the Augustinian monks in Eisleben, and obtained their promise that Luther should be requested to write a letter to the pope assuring him that he had never attacked the pope's person. On September 11th Luther reported to Spalatin what he had done, and said that, although neither he nor his fellow-monks had any confidence in the plan, he would do Miltitz the favor of writing such a letter. This promise seemed meaningless to him after the bull against him had been published. The papal bull had been obtained by Eck, whom Miltitz now considered to be substituted for himself in dealing with Luther, in spite of the authority he had received. That the bull was ignored in some places and despised in others, pleased him and gave him new courage. There might, after all, be some chance for him to make use of his diplomatic skill.

Again he invited Luther to meet him in Lichtenberg. They met in the monastery of St. Anthony on October 12th, and Luther renewed his promise to write to the pope, to send the letter within twelve days, and to date it back to September 6th, that the appearance of intimidation by the papal bull might be avoided. It was agreed that Luther should send with the letter an historical account of his difficulties with the Roman Church which would show that Eck was the chief instigator, and that Luther had been forced to take the positions he defended. In writing, however, the historical review became a part of the letter, and a treatise of far different tone was sent as a gift to the pope, and as an evidence of the kind of work Luther would prefer to do if his opponents permitted him to choose—the Treatise on Christian Liberty.

It is again a question whether the pope received this letter. It has been an interesting speculation for more than one writer, what the thoughts and feelings of Leo the Tenth might have been if he did receive and read it. Schaff traces the progress of Luther in the three letters he wrote to the pope: "In his first letter to the pope, 1518, Luther had thrown himself at his feet as an obedient son of the vicar of Christ; in his second letter, 1519, he still had addressed him as a humble subject, yet refusing to recant his conscientious convictions; in his third and last letter he addressed him as an equal, speaking to him with great respect for his personal character even beyond his deserts, but denouncing in the severest terms the Roman See, and comparing him to a lamb among wolves, and to Daniel in the den of lions."[1] If the pope ever read it, "it must have filled him with mingled feelings of indignation and disgust."

We may go even farther. Luther thinks of St. Bernard's attitude toward Pope Eugene, and Bernard was Eugene's superior in the Cistercian order and had been looked up to as "father." Luther writes as a father confessor to a friend in trouble, and might have quoted Bernard's words: "I grieve

[1] Church History, vi, 224 f.

with you. I should say, I grieve with you if, indeed, you also grieve. Otherwise I should have rather said, I grieve for you; because that is not grieving with another when there is none who grieves. Therefore if you grieve, I grieve with you; if not, still I grieve, and then most of all, knowing that the member which is without feeling is the farther removed from health and that the sick man who does not feel his sickness is in the greater danger."[1]

The pope was a humanist, not a spiritually minded priest; we may, therefore, believe that Charles Beard is not far wrong in his estimate of the possible effect of this letter upon him: "If Giovanni de Medici, the head of a house which had long come to consider itself princely, and the occupant of the Fisherman's chair, when it claimed to be the highest of earthly thrones, read this bold apostrophe, addressed to him by a 'peasant and a peasant's son,' he must have thought him mad with conceit and vanity. He was incapable of being touched by the moral nobleness of the appeal, and so audacious a contempt of merely social distinctions the world has rarely seen."[2]

After the mighty thunder of the Address to the Christian Nobility and the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, the Treatise on the Liberty of a Christian Man is, indeed, like a still, small voice. Luther himself says: "Unless I am deceived, it is the whole of Christian living in a brief form." Perhaps we may trace here also the influence of St. Bernard's De Consideratione, which was written as a devotional book for the pope and was a manual of Christian living for the pope, as this is a manual of Christian living for all Christians.

It has been rather difficult for the enemies of Luther to find much fault with this book. The Catholic historians, Janssen and Hergenröther, do not mention it. Grisar characteristically devotes a little space to each of the three great writings of 1520, and considers the book on Christian Liberty as the most mischievous of them all. "It does, indeed, frequently bring its false thoughts in the form of that mystical, heart-searching style which Luther learned from older German models."[3] The French Catholic, Leon Cristiani, is far more generous in his estimate: "A truly religious spirit breathes in these pages. Provoking polemic is almost entirely avoided. Here one finds again the inspiration of the great mystics of the Middle Ages. Does not the 'Imitation' continually describe the powerlessness of man when left to himself, the infinite mercy of God, the great benefit of the redemption of Christ? Does it not preach the necessity of doing all things through love, nothing of necessity? He is not a true Christian who would venture to disapprove the passages in which Luther speaks so eloquently of the goodness of God, of the gratitude which it should inspire in us, of the spon-

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[1] De consideratione, i, 1.
[2] Martin Luther and the Reformation in Germany, London, 1889, p. 370.
[3] Luther, I, 351.

taneity which should mark our obedience, of the desire of imitating Christ which should inspire us."[1]

Protestants consider this book "perhaps the most beautiful of Luther's writings, the result of religious contemplation rather than of theological labor."[2] "It takes rank with the best books of Luther, and rises far above the angry controversies of his age, during which he composed it, in the full possession of the positive truth and peace of the religion of Christ."[3]

The clear presentation of the thought of the liberty of a Christian man occurs at the close of the Tessaradecas.[4] In the Babylonian Captivity Luther had promised to publish a treatise on the subject after he had seen the effect of that treatise.[5] But the promise to send a treatise to the pope gave him an earlier opportunlty, so that barely a month and a half intervened between the publication of the Captivity, October 6th, and that of the Liberty, middle of November. The German, although a translation in part and in part an abbreviation and rewriting of the Latin, appeared first, before November 16th. The publisher, seeing his opportunity, had, however, issued the Letter to the Pope in German separately before November 4th,[6] so that a new dedicatory letter, addressed to Hieronymus Mülphordt (Mühlpfort), of Zwickau, was prefixed to the German edition.

Our translation is made from the Latin, although the German has been compared wherever it is a real translation.

Two translations into English appeared in the sixteenth century: one printed by John Byddell before 1544, the translation being, according to Preserved Smith,[7] by John Tewkesbury; the other, prepared by James Bell and printed by Ralph Newbery and H. Bynneman, in 1579. Unfortunately, neither of these was accessible to the present translators. Modern translations, into English by Wace and Buchheim, and into German by Lemme, have been consulted.

W. A. LAMBERT.

South Bethlehem, Pa.

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[1] Du Luthéranisme au Protestantisme, 1911, p. 199.
[2] Kolde, Luther, I, 274.
[3] Schaff, VI, 224.
[4] Vol. I, p. 170.
[5] See above, page 284.
[6] Enders, II, p. 496, gives as the date when the letter was written, "after Oct. 13th"; Smith, Life and Letters of Martin Luther, p. 91, dates it Oct. 20th.
[7] Nation, May 29, 1913.

LETTER

TO POPE LEO X.

JESUS.

To Leo the Tenth, Pope at Rome: Martin Luther wishes thee salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Pope's Person

In the midst of the monsters of this age with whom I am now for the third year waging war, I am compelled at times to look up also to thee, Leo, most blessed Father, and to think of thee; nay, since thou art now and again regarded as the sole cause of my warfare, I cannot but think of thee always. And although the causeless raging of thy godless flatterers against me has compelled me to appeal from thy See to a future council, despite those most empty decrees of thy predecessors Pius and Julius, who with a foolish tyranny forbade such an appeal, yet I have never so estranged my mind from thy Blessedness as not with all my heart to wish thee and thy See every blessing, for which I have, as much as lay in me, besought God with earnest prayers. It is true, I have made bold almost to despise and to triumph over those who have tried to frighten me with the majesty of thy name and authority. But there is one thing which I cannot despise, and that is my excuse for writing once more to thy Blessedness. I understand that I am accused of great rashness, and that this rashness is said to be my great fault, in which, they say, I have not spared even thy person.

For my part, I will openly confess that I know I have only spoken good and honorable things of thee whenever I have made mention of thy name. And if I had done otherwise,

I myself could by no means approve of it, but would entirely approve the judgment others have formed of me, and do nothing more gladly than recant such rashness and impiety on my part. I have called thee a Daniel in Babylon,[1] and every one who reads knows with what zeal I defended thy notable innocence against thy defamer, Sylvester.[2] Indeed, thy reputation and the fame of thy blameless life, sung as they are throughout the world by the writings of so many great men, are too well known and too high to be assailed in any way by any one man, however great he may be. I am not so foolish as to attack him whom every one praises: it has rather been, and always will be, my endeavor not to attack even those whom public report decries; for I take no pleasure in the crimes of any man, since I am conscious enough of the great beam in my own eye, nor could I be he that should cast the first stone at the adulteress.

Matt. 7:3
John 8:7

Luther's Enemies

I have indeed sharply inveighed against ungodly teachings in general, and I have not been slow to bite my adversaries, not because of their immorality, but because of their ungodliness. And of this I repent so little that I have determined to persevere in that fervent zeal, and to despise the judgment of men, following the example of Christ, Who in His zeal called His adversaries a generation of vipers, blind, hypocrites, children of the devil. And Paul arraigned the sorcerer as a child of the devil full of all subtilty and mischief, and brands others as dogs, deceivers and adulterers. If you will allow those delicate ears to judge, nothing would be more biting and more unrestrained than Paul. Who is more biting than the prophets? Nowadays, it is true, our ears are made so delicate by the mad crowds of flatterers that as soon as we meet with a disapproving voice we cry out that we are bitten, and when we cannot ward off the truth with any other pretext we put it to flight by ascribing it to a fierce temper, impatience and shamelessness. What is the good of salt if it does not bite? Or

Matt. 23:13, 17, 33
John 8:44
Acts 13:10
Phil. 3:2
2 Cor. 11:13
2 Cor. 2:17

[1] See below, page 304.
[2] Sylvester Prierias. See Vol. I, p. 338.

of the edge of the sword if it does not kill? Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully. Jer. 48:10

Wherefore, most excellent Leo, I pray thee, after I have by this letter vindicated myself, give me a hearing, and believe that I have never thought evil of thy person, but that I am a man who would wish thee all good things eternally, and that I have no quarrel with any man concerning his morality, but only concerning the Word of truth. In all things else I will yield to any man whatsoever: to give up or to deny the Word I have neither the power nor the will. If any man thinks otherwise of me, or has understood my words differently, he does not think aright, nor has he understood what I have really said.

The Roman Curia

But thy See, which is called the Roman Curia, and of which neither thou nor any man can deny that it is more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom ever was, and which is, as far as I can see, characterized by a totally depraved, hopeless and notorious wickedness—that See I have truly despised, and I have been incensed to think that in thy name and under the guise of the Roman Church the people of Christ are mocked. And so I have resisted and will resist that See, as long as the spirit of faith shall live in me. Not that I shall strive after the impossible or hope that by my lone efforts anything will be accomplished in that most disordered Babylon, where the rage of so many sycophants is turned against me; but I acknowledge myself a debtor to my brethren, whom it is my duty to warn, that fewer of them may be destroyed by the plagues of Rome, or at least that their destruction may be less cruel.

For, as thou well knowest, these many years there has flowed forth from Rome, like a flood covering the world, nothing but a laying waste of men's bodies and souls and possessions, and the worst possible examples of the worst possible things. For all this is clearer than the day to all men, and the Roman Church, once the most holy of all, has become the most licentious den of thieves, the most shameless of all brothels, the kingdom of sin, death and hell; so Matt. 21:13

that even Antichrist himself, should he come, could think of nothing to add to its wickedness.

Matt. 10:16 Dan. 6:16 Ezek. 2:6 John 6:9 — Meanwhile thou, Leo, sittest as a lamb in the midst of wolves, like Daniel in the midst of the lions, and, with Ezekiel, thou dwellest among scorpions. What canst thou do single-handed, against these monsters? Join to thyself three or four thoroughly learned and thoroughly good cardinals: what are even these among so many? You would all be poisoned before you could undertake to make a single decree to help matters. There is no hope for the Roman Curia: the wrath of God is come upon it to the end; it hates councils, it fears a reformation, it cannot reduce the raging of its wickedness, and is meriting the praise bestowed upon its mother, of whom it is written, "We have cured Babylon, but she is not healed: let us forsake her."[1] It was thy duty, indeed, and that of thy cardinals, to remedy these evils, but that gout of theirs mocks the healing hand, and neither chariot nor horse heeds the guiding rein.[2] Moved by such sympathy for thee, I have always grieved, most excellent Leo, that thou hast been made pope in these times, for thou wert worthy of better days. The Roman Curia has not deserved to have thee or men like thee, but rather Satan himself; and in truth it is he more than thou who rules in that Babylon.

The Pope's Helplessness

1 Thess. 2:16

Jer. 51:9

O would that thou mightest lay aside what thy most mischievous enemies boast of as thy glory, and wert living on some small priestly income of thine own, or on thy family inheritance! To glory in that glory none are worthy save the Iscariots, the sons of perdition. For what dost thou accomplish in the Curia, my dear Leo? Only this: the more criminal and abominable a man is, the more successfully will he use thy name and authority to destroy the wealth and the souls of men, to increase crime, to suppress faith and truth and the whole Church of God. O truly, most unhappy Leo, thou sittest on a most dangerous

John 17:12

[1] Cf. Preface to Prierias' Epitome, Weimar Ed., VI, 329.
[2] Virgil, Georgics, I, 514.

throne; for I tell thee the truth, because I wish thee well. If Bernard pitied his Pope Eugene[1] at a time when the Roman See, although even then most corrupt, yet ruled with better prospects, why should not we lament who have for three hundred years had so great an increase of corruption and worthlessness? Is it not true that under yon vast expanse of heaven there is nothing more corrupt, more pestilential, more hateful than the Roman Curia? It surpasses the godlessness of the Turks beyond all comparison, so that in truth, whereas it was once a gate of heaven, it is now an open mouth of hell, and such a mouth as, because of the wrath of God, cannot be shut; there is only one thing that we can try to do, as I have said: perchance we may be able to call back a few from that yawning chasm of Rome and so save them.

Now thou seest, my Father Leo, how and why I have so violently attacked that pestilential See: for so far have I been from raging against thy person that I even hoped I might gain thy favor and save thee, if I should make a strong and sharp assault upon that prison, nay that hell of thine. For thou and thy salvation and the salvation of many others with thee will be served by every thing that men of ability can contribute to the confusion of this wicked Curia. They do thy work, who bring evil upon it; they glorify Christ, who in every way curse it. In short, they are Christians who are not Romans.

Luther's Controversies

To go yet farther, I never intended to inveigh against the Roman Curia, or to raise any controversy concerning it. For when I saw that all efforts to save it were hopeless, I despised it and gave it a bill of divorcement and said to it, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is unclean, let him be unclean still." Then I gave myself to the quiet and peaceful study of holy Scripture, that I might

Deut. 24:1
Rev. 22:11

[1] Pope Eugene III, 1145–1153, for whom Bernard of Clairvaux wrote a devotional book, De consideratione, in which he rehearsed the duties and the dangers of the pope. See Realencyklopädie II, 632; KÖHLER, Luther u. die Kirchengeschichte, 311 f. Cf. Resolutiones disput. de indulg. virtute, 1518, CLEMEN, I, 113.

thus be of benefit to my brethren about me. When I had made some progress in these studies, Satan opened his eyes

Eck and filled his servant John Eck,[1] a notable enemy of Christ, with an insatiable lust for glory, and thereby stirred him up to drag me at unawares into a disputation, laying hold on me by one little word about the primacy of the Roman Church which I had incidentally let fall. Then that boasting braggart, frothing and gnashing his teeth, declared that he would venture all for the glory of God and the honor of the holy Apostolic See, and, puffed up with the hope of misusing thy power, he looked forward with perfect confidence to a victory over me. He sought not so much to establish the primacy of Peter as his own leadership among the theologians of our time; and to that end he thought it no small help if he should triumph over Luther. When that debate ended unhappily for the sophist, an incredible madness overcame the man: for he feels that he alone must bear the blame of all that I have brought forth to the shame of Rome.

Cajetan But permit me, I pray thee, most excellent Leo, this once to plead my cause and to make charges against thy real enemies. Thou knowest, I believe, what dealings thy legate, Cardinal of St. Sixtus,[2] an unwise and unfortunate, or rather, unfaithful man, had with me. When, because of reverence for thy name, I had put myself and all my case in his hand, he did not try to establish peace, although with a single word he could easily have done so, since I at that

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[1] John Maier, born in Eck an der Günz, and generally known as John Eck; an ambitious theologian, who first attacked his professor in Freiburg, then Erasmus' Annotations to the New Testament, and next wrote against Luther's XCV Theses (see Vol. I, 10, 176, etc.). He was the opponent of Luther and Carlstadt at the Leipzig Disputation (1519), to which Luther here refers.

[2] Jacopo de Vio, born in Gaeta, Italy, in 1469, died in 1534. The name Cajetan he derived from his birthplace, the Latin name of which is Cajeta. In the Dominican Order he was known as Thomas, so that his writings are published under the title, Thomae de Vio Cajetani opera. He was made cardinal-presbyter with the title of S. Sisto in 1517, and in the following year was sent as papal legate to the Diet of Augsburg. Here he met and examined Luther, but accomplished nothing because he insisted that Luther must recant. See Kolde in Realencyklopädie 3, 632 ff.

time promised to keep silent and to end the controversy, if my opponents were ordered to do the same. But as he was a man who sought glory, and was not content with that agreement, he began to justify my opponents, to give them full freedom and to order me to recant, a thing not included in his instructions. When the matter was in a fair way, his untimely arbitrariness brought it into a far worse condition. Therefore, for what followed later Luther is not to blame; all the blame is Cajetan's, who did not suffer me to keep silent and to rest, as I then most earnestly asked him to do. What more should I have done?

Next came Carl Miltitz,[1] also a nuncio of thy Blessedness, who after great and varied efforts and constant going to and fro, although he omitted nothing that might help to restore that status of the question which Cajetan had rashly and haughtily disturbed, at last with the help of the most illustrious prince, Frederick the Elector, barely managed to arrange several private conferences with me. Again I yielded to your name, I was prepared to keep silent, and even accepted as arbiter either the archbishop of Treves or the bishop of Naumburg. So matters were arranged. But while this plan was being followed with good prospects of success, lo, that other and greater enemy of thine, Eck, broke in with the Leipzig Disputation which he had undertaken against Dr. Carlstadt. When a new question concerning the primacy of the pope was raised, he suddenly turned his weapons against me and quite overthrew that counsel of peace. Meanwhile Carl Miltitz waited: a disputation was held, judges were selected; but here also no

Miltitz

[1] Carl von Miltitz was educated at Cologne, was prebendary at Mainz, Trier and Meissen, and later went to Rome, where he acted as agent for Frederick, Elector of Saxony, and Duke George the Bearded. "After the endeavours of Cardinal Cajetan to silence Luther had failed, Miltitz appeared to be the person most suited to bring the negotiations to a successful ending." (Catholic Encyclopedia, X, 318, where, however, the statement that Miltitz was educated at Mainz, Trier and Meissen is evidently a slip.) It seems that Miltitz returned to Rome for a time, but in 1522 again came to Germany, where he was drowned in the Main, November 20, 1529. See Flathe, Art. Miltitz, in Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, 21, 759 f.

decision was reached, and no wonder: through the lies, the tricks, the wiles of Eck everything was stirred up, aggravated and confounded worse than ever, so that whatever decision might have been reached, a greater conflagration would have resulted. For he sought glory, not the truth. Here also I left nothing undone that I ought to have done.[1]

Eck I admit that on this occasion no small amount of corrupt Roman practices came to light, but whatever wrong was done was the fault of Eck, who undertook a task beyond his strength, and, while he strove madly for his own glory, revealed the shame of Rome to all the world. He is thy enemy, my dear Leo, or rather the enemy of thy Curia. From the example of this one man thou canst learn that there is no enemy more injurious than a flatterer. For what did he accomplish with his flattery but an evil which no king could have accomplished? To-day the name of the Roman Curia is a stench throughout the world, and papal authority languishes, ignorance that was once held in honor is evil spoken of; and of all this we should have heard nothing if Eck had not upset the counsel of peace planned by Carl and myself, as he himself now clearly sees, and is angry, too late and to no purpose, that my books were published. This he should have thought of when, like a horse that whinnies on the picket-line, he was madly seeking only his own glory, and sought only his own gain through thee at the greatest peril to thee. The vainglorious man thought that I would stop and keep silent at the terror of thy name; for I do not believe that he trusted entirely to his talents and learning. Now, when he sees that I have more courage than that and have not been silenced, he repents him too late of his rashness and understands that there is One in heaven who resists the proud and humbles the haughty, if indeed he does understand it at last.

1 Pet. 5:5
Judith 6:15

[1] The German reads: "Thus I always did what was required of me, and neglected nothing which it was my duty to do."

Since we gained nothing by this disputation except that we brought greater confusion to the cause of Rome, Carl Miltitz made a third attempt; he came to the fathers of the Augustinian Order assembled in their chapter, and asked counsel in settling the controversy which had now grown most confused and dangerous. Since, by the favor of God, they had no hope of being able to proceed against me with violence, some of the most famous of their number were sent to me, and asked me at least to show honor to the person of thy Blessedness, and in a humble letter to plead as my excuse thy innocence and mine; they said that the affair was not yet in the most desperate state if of his innate goodness Leo the Tenth would take a hand in it. As I have always both offered and desired peace that I might devote myself to quieter and more useful studies, and have stormed with so great fury merely for the purpose of overwhelming by volume and violence of words, no less than of intellect, those whom I knew to be very unequal foes: I not only gladly ceased, but also with joy and thankfulness considered it a most welcome kindness to me if our hope could be fulfilled. **The Augustinians**

So I come, most blessed Father, and, prostrate before thee, I pray, if it be possible do thou interpose and hold in check those flatterers, who are the enemies of peace while they pretend to keep peace. But that I will recant, most blessed Father, let no one imagine, unless he prefer to involve the whole question in greater turmoil. Furthermore, I will accept no rules for the interpretation of the Word of God, since the Word of God, which teaches the liberty of all things else, dare not be bound. Grant me these two points, and there is nothing that I could not or would not most gladly do or endure. I hate disputations; I will draw out no one; but then I do not wish others to draw me out; if they do, as Christ is my Teacher, I will not be speechless. For, when once this controversy has been cited before thee and settled, thy Blessedness will be able with a small and easy word to silence both parties and command them to keep the peace, and that is what I have always wished to hear. **Appeal to the Pope**

2 Tim. 2:9

Do not listen, therefore, my dear Leo, to those sirens who make thee out to be no mere man but a demigod, so that thou mayest command and require what thou wilt. It will not be done in that fashion, and thou wilt not succeed. Thou art a servant of servants,[1] and beyond all other men in a most pitiable and most dangerous position. Be not deceived by those who pretend that thou art lord of the world and allow no one to be a Christian unless he accept thy authority; who prate that thou hast power over heaven, hell and purgatory. These are thy enemies and seek thy soul to destroy it; as Isaiah says, "O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee." They err who exalt thee above a council and above the Church universal. They err who ascribe to thee alone the right of interpreting Scripture; for under cover of thy name they seek to establish all their own wickedness in the Church, and alas! through them Satan has already made much headway under thy predecessors. In short, believe none who exalt thee, believe those who humble thee. For this is the judgment of God; "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." See, how unlike His successors is Christ, although they all would be His vicars. And I fear that most of them have indeed been too literally His vicars. For a vicar is a vicar only when his lord is absent. And if the pope rules while Christ is absent and does not dwell in his heart, what else is he but a vicar of Christ? But what is such a Church except a mass of people without Christ? And what is such a vicar else than antichrist and an idol? How much more correctly did the Apostles call themselves servants of the present Christ, and not vicars of an absent Christ!

1 Kings 19:10
Isa. 3:12 (Vulgate)
Luke 1:52

Luther follows St. Bernard's Example

Perhaps I am impudent, in that I seem to instruct so great, so exalted a personage, from whom we ought all to learn, and from whom, as those plagues of thine boast, the thrones of judges receive their decisions. But I am follow-

[1] This was the usual title of the pope, with which the bull of excommunication opened: Leo Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei.

ing the example of St. Bernard in his book de consideratione ad Eugenium, a book every pope should have by heart. For what I am doing I do not from an eagerness to teach, but as an evidence of that pure and faithful solicitude which constrains us to have regard for the things of our neighbors even when they are safe, and does not permit us to consider their dignity or lack of dignity, since it is intent only upon the danger they run or the advantage they may gain. For when I know that thy Blessedness is driven and tossed about at Rome, that is, that far out at sea thou art threatened on all sides with endless dangers, and art laboring hard in that miserable plight, so that thou dost need even the slightest help of the least of thy brethren, I do not think it is absurd of me, if for the time I forget thy high office and do what brotherly love demands. I have no desire to flatter in so serious and dangerous a matter, but if men do not understand that I am thy friend and thy most humble subject, there is One that John 8:50
understandeth and judgeth.

Finally, that I may not approach thee empty-handed, Luther's Gift
blessed Father, I bring with me this little treatise published under thy name as an omen of peace and of good hope. From this book thou mayest judge with what studies I would prefer to be more profitably engaged, as I could be if your godless flatterers would permit me, and had hitherto permitted me. It is a small thing if thou regard its bulk, but, unless I am deceived, it is the whole of Christian living in brief form, if thou wilt grasp its meaning. I am a poor man, and have no other gift to offer, and thou hast no need to be made rich by any other than a spiritual gift. With this I commend myself to thy Fatherhood and Blessedness. May the Lord Jesus preserve thee forever. Amen.

Wittenberg, September 6, 1520.[1]

[1] See above, pp. 298, 300, and compare the letters of Miltitz to the elector Frederick in Smith, Luther's Correspondence, I, pp. 367 f.

A TREATISE ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Faith MANY have thought Christian faith to be an easy thing, and not a few have given it a place among the virtues. This they do because they have had no experience of it, and have never tasted what great virtue there is in faith. For it is impossible that any one should write well of it or well understand what is correctly written of it, unless he has at some time tasted the courage faith gives a man when trials oppress him. But he who has had even a faint taste of it can never write, speak, meditate or hear enough concerning it. For it is a living fountain springing up into life ever-
John 4:14 lasting, as Christ calls it in John iv. For my part, although I have no wealth of faith to boast of and know how scant my store is, yet I hope that, driven about by great and various temptations, I have attained to a little faith, and that I can speak of it, if not more elegantly, certainly more to the point, than those literalists and all too subtile disputants have hitherto done, who have not even understood what they have written.

Liberty and Bondage That I may make the way easier for the unlearned—for only such do I serve —I set down first these two propositions concerning the liberty and the bondage of the spirit:

A Christian man is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Although these two theses seem to contradict each other, yet, if they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully. For they are both
1 Cor. 9:19 Rom. 13:8 Paul's own, who says, in I Cor. ix, "Whereas I was free, I made myself the servant of all," and, Rom. xiii, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Now love by its very nature is ready to serve and to be subject to him who is loved. So Christ, although Lord of all, was made of a

woman, made under the law, and hence was at the same time free and a servant, at the same time in the form of God and in the form of a servant. Gal. 4:4 Phil. 2:6 f.

Let us start, however, with something more remote from our subject, but more obvious. Man[1] has a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily. According to the spiritual nature, which men call the soul, he is called a spiritual, or inner, or new man; according to the bodily nature, which men call the flesh, he is called a carnal, or outward, or old man, of whom the Apostle writes, in II Cor. iv, "Though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Because of this diversity of nature the Scriptures assert contradictory things of the same man, since these two men in the same man contradict each other, since the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh (Gal. v). **Man's Nature** 2 Cor. 4:16 Gal. 5:17

First, let us contemplate the inward man, to see how a righteous, free and truly Christian man, that is, a new, spiritual, inward man, comes into being. It is evident that no external thing, whatsoever it be, has any influence whatever in producing Christian righteousness or liberty, nor in producing unrighteousness or bondage. A simple argument will furnish the proof. What can it profit the soul if the body fare well, be free and active, eat, drink and do as it pleases? For in these things even the most godless slaves of all the vices fare well. On the other hand, how will ill health or imprisonment or hunger or thirst or any other external misfortune hurt the soul? With these things even the most godly men are afflicted, and those who because of a clear conscience are most free. None of these things touch either the liberty or the bondage of the soul. The soul receives no benefit if the body is adorned with the sacred robes of the priesthood, or dwells in sacred places, or is occupied with sacred duties, or prays, fasts, abstains from certain kinds of food or does any work whatsoever that can be done by the body and in the body. The righteousness **The Inward Man**

[1] Here the German is more accurate: "Every Christian man."

and the freedom of the soul demand something far different, since the things which have been mentioned could be done by any wicked man, and such works produce nothing but hypocrites. On the other hand, it will not hurt the soul if the body is clothed in secular dress, dwells in unconsecrated places, eats and drinks as others do, does not pray aloud, and neglects to do all the things mentioned above, which hypocrites can do.

The Word of God

Further, to put aside all manner of works, even contemplation, meditation, and all that the soul can do, avail nothing. One thing and one only is necessary for Christian life, righteousness and liberty. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the Gospel of Christ, as he says, John xi, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, shall not die forever"; and John viii, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed"; and Matthew iv, "Not in bread alone doth man live; but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate. This is why the prophet in the entire cxix Psalm, and in many other places of Scripture, with so many sighs yearns after the Word of God and applies so many names to it. On the other hand, there is no more terrible plague with which the wrath of God can smite men than a famine of the hearing of His Word, as He says in Amos, just as there is no greater mercy than when He sends forth His Word, as we read in Psalm cvii, "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Nor was Christ sent into the world for any other ministry but that of the Word, and the whole spiritual estate, apostles, bishops and all the priests,

John 11:25
John 8:26
Matt. 4:4
Psalm 119
Amos 8:11 f.
Psalm 107:20

has been called and instituted only for the ministry of the Word.

The Gospel

You ask, "What then is this Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?" I answer, The Apostle explains that in Romans i. The Word is the Gospel of God concerning His Son, Who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit Who sanctifies. For to preach Christ means to feed the soul, to make it righteous, to set it free and to save it, if it believe the preaching. For faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God, Romans x, "If thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe with thy heart that God hath raised Him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved"; and again, "The end of the law is Christ, unto righteousness to every one that believeth"; and, Romans i, "The just shall live by his faith." The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever, but only by faith. Hence it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not by any works; for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and therefore it would not need faith. But this faith cannot at all exist in connection with works, that is to say, if you at the same time claim to be justified by works, whatever their character; for that would be to halt between two sides, to worship Baal and to kiss the hand, which, as Job says, is a very great iniquity. Therefore the moment you begin to believe, you learn that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful and damnable, as Romans iii says, "For all have sinned and lack the glory of God"; and again, "There is none just, there is none that doeth good, all have turned out of the way: they are become unprofitable together." When you have learned this, you will know that you need Christ, Who suffered and rose again for you, that, believing in Him, you may through this faith become a new man, in that all your sins are forgiven, and you are justified by the merits of another, namely, of Christ alone.

Rom. 1:1 ff.

Rom. 10:9

Rom. 10:4
Rom. 1:17
Hab. 2:4

1 Kings 18:21
Job 31:27 f.

Rom. 3:23
Rom. 3:10 ff.

Justification by Faith

Since, therefore, this faith can rule only in the inward man, as Romans x says, "With the heart we believe unto righteousness"; and since faith alone justifies, it is clear that the inward man cannot be justified, made free and be saved by any outward work or dealing whatsoever, and that works, whatever their character, have nothing to do with this inward man. On the other hand, only ungodliness and unbelief of heart, and no outward work, make him guilty and a damnable servant of sin. Wherefore it ought to be the first concern of every Christian to lay aside all trust in works, and more and more to strengthen faith alone, and through faith to grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus, Who suffered and rose for him, as Peter teaches, in the last chapter of his first Epistle; since no other work makes a Christian. Thus when the Jews asked Christ, John vi, what they should do that they might work the works of God, He brushed aside the multitude of works in which He saw that they abounded, and enjoined upon them a single work, saying, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent. For Him hath God the Father sealed."

1 Pet. 5:10

John 6:28 f.

John 6:29
John 6:27

Hence true faith in Christ is a treasure beyond comparison, which brings with it all salvation and saves from every evil, as Christ says in the last chapter of Mark, "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." This treasure Isaiah beheld and foretold in chapter x, "The Lord shall make an abridged and consuming word upon the land, and the consumption abridged shall overflow with righteousness"; as if he said, "Faith, which is a brief and perfect fulfilment of the law, shall fill believers with so great righteousness that they shall need nothing more for their righteousness." So also Paul says, Romans x, "With the heart we believe unto righteousness."

Mark 16:16

Isa. 10:22

Rom. 10:10

Faith and Works

Should you ask, how it comes that faith alone justifies and without works offers us such a treasury of great benefits, when so many works, ceremonies and laws are prescribed

in the Scriptures, I answer: First of all, remember what has been said: faith alone, without works, justifies, makes free and saves, as we shall later make still more clear. Here we must point out that all the Scriptures of God are divided into two parts—commands and promises. The commands indeed teach things that are good, but the things taught are not done as soon as taught; for the commands show us what we ought to do, but do not give us the power to do it; they are intended to teach a man to know himself, that through them he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his powers. That is why they are called and are the Old Testament. For example: "Thou shalt not covet" is a command which convicts us all of being sinners, since no one is able to avoid coveting, however much he may struggle against it. Therefore, in order not to covet, and to fulfil the command, a man is compelled to despair of himself, and to seek elsewhere and from some one else the help which he does not find in himself, as is said in Hosea, "Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy help is only in Me." And as we fare with this one command, so we fare with all; for it is equally impossible for us to keep any one of them.

Commands reveal Weakness

Ex. 20:17

Hos. 13:9

But when a man through the commands has learned to know his weakness, and has become troubled as to how he may satisfy the law, since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall perish, otherwise man will be condemned without hope; then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself no means of justification and salvation. Here the second part of the Scriptures stands ready—the promises of God, which declare the glory of God and say, "If you wish to fulfil the law, and not to covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ, in Whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty and all things are promised you; if you believe you shall have all, if you believe not you shall lack all." For what is impossible for you in all the works of the law, many as they are, but all useless, you will accomplish in a short and easy

Matt. 5:18

Promises give Strength

way through faith. For God our Father has made all things depend on faith, so that whoever has faith, shall have all, and whoever has it not, shall have nothing. "For He has concluded all under unbelief, that He might have mercy on all," Romans xi. Thus the promises of God give what the commands of God ask, and fulfil what the law prescribes, that all things may be of God alone, both the commands and the fulfilling of the commands. He alone commands, He also alone fulfils. Therefore the promises of God belong to the New Testament, nay, they are the New Testament.

Rom. 11:32

And since these promises of God are holy, true, righteous, free and peaceful words, full of all goodness, it comes to pass that the soul which clings to them with a firm faith, is so united with them, nay, altogether taken up into them, that it not only shares in all their power, but is saturated and made drunken with it. For if a touch of Christ healed, how much more will this most tender touch in the spirit, rather this absorbing of the Word, communicate to the soul all things that are the Word's. This, then, is how through faith alone without works the soul is justified by the Word of God, sanctified, made true and peaceful and free, filled with every blessing and made truly a child of God, as John says, "To them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name."

John 1:12

Faith Justifies

From what has been said it is easily seen whence faith has such great power, and why no good work nor all good works together can equal it: no work can cling to the Word of God nor be in the soul; in the soul faith alone and the Word have sway. As the Word is, so it makes the soul, as heated iron glows like fire because of the union of fire with it. It is clear then that a Christian man has in his faith all that he needs, and needs no works to justify him. And if he has no need of works, neither does he need the law; and if he has no need of the law, surely he is free from the law, and it is true, "the law is not made for a righteous man." And this is that Christian liberty, even our faith, which does not indeed cause us to live in idleness or in wickedness,

1 Tim. 1:9

but makes the law and works unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation.

Faith Fulfils the Commands

This is the first power of faith. Let us now examine the second also. For it is a further function of faith, that whom it trusts it also honors with the most reverent and high regard, since it considers him truthful and trustworthy. For there is no other honor equal to the estimate of truthfulness and righteousness with which we honor him whom we trust. Or could we ascribe to a man anything greater than truthfulness, and righteousness, and perfect goodness? On the other hand, there is no way in which we can show greater contempt for a man than to regard him as false and wicked and to suspect him, as we do when we do not trust him. So when the soul firmly trusts God's promises, it regards Him as truthful and righteous, than which nothing more excellent can be ascribed to God. This is the very highest worship of God, that we ascribe to Him truthfulness, righteousness and whatever else ought to be ascribed to one who is trusted. Then the soul consents to all His will, then it hallows His name and suffers itself to be dealt with according to God's good pleasure, because, clinging to God's promises, it does not doubt that He, Who is true, just and wise, will do, dispose and provide all things well. And is not such a soul, by this faith, in all things most obedient to God? What commandment is there that such obedience has not abundantly fulfilled? What more complete fulfilment is there than obedience in all things? But this obedience is not rendered by works, but by faith alone. On the other hand, what greater rebellion against God, what greater wickedness, what greater contempt of God is there than not believing His promises? For what is this but to make God a liar or to doubt that He is truthful?—that is, to ascribe truthfulness to one's self, but to God lying and vanity? Does not a man who does this deny God, and in his heart set up himself as his own idol? Then of what avail are works done in such wickedness, even if they were the works of angels and apostles? Rightly, therefore, has God Rom. 11:32

concluded all—not in anger or lust, but in unbelief; so that they who imagine that they are fulfilling the law by doing the works of chastity and mercy required by the law (the civil and human virtues), might not be confident that they will be saved; they are included under the sin of unbelief, and must either seek mercy or be justly condemned.

But when God sees that we count Him to be true, and by the faith of our heart pay Him the great honor which is due Him, He in turn does us the great honor of counting us true and righteous for our faith's sake. For faith works truth and righteousness by giving to God what belongs to Him; therefore, God in turn gives glory to our righteousness. It is true and just that God is truthful and just, and to count Him and confess Him so is to be truthful and just.

1 Sam. 2:30 So in I Sam. ii, He says, "Them that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise Me, shall be lightly esteemed."

Rom. 4:3 So Paul says in Rom. iv, that Abraham's faith was counted unto him for righteousness, because by it he most perfectly gave glory to God, and that for the same reason our faith shall be counted unto us for righteousness if we believe.

Faith Unites with Christ

The third incomparable benefit of faith is this, that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. And by this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage, nay, by far the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but frail types of this one true marriage, it follows that all they have they have in common, the good as well as the evil, so that the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as if it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as His own. Let us compare these and we shall see things that cannot be estimated. Christ is full of grace, life and salvation; the soul is full of sins, death and condemnation. Now let faith come between them, and it shall come to pass that sins, death and hell are Christ's, and grace, life and salvation are the soul's. For it behooves Him, if He is a bridegroom, to take upon

Eph. 5:31 f.

Himself the things which are His bride's, and to bestow upon her the things that are His. For if He gives her His body and His very self, how shall He not give her all that is His? And if He takes the body of the bride, how shall He not take all that is hers?

Lo! here we have a pleasant vision not only of communion, but of a blessed strife and victory and salvation and redemption. For Christ is God and man in one person, Who has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and Who cannot sin, die or be condemned; His righteousness, life and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent; and He by the wedding-ring of faith shares in the sins, death and pains of hell which are His bride's, nay, makes them His own, and acts as if they were His own, and as if He Himself had sinned; He suffered, died and descended into hell that He might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow Him up, they were of necessity swallowed up of Him in a mighty duel. For His righteousness is greater than the sins of all men, His life stronger than death, His salvation more invincible than hell. Thus the believing soul by the pledge of its faith is free in Christ, its Bridegroom, from all sins, secure against death and against hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life and salvation of Christ, its Bridegroom. So He presents to Himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing in the Word of life, that is, by faith in the Word of life, of righteousness, and of salvation. Thus He marries her to Himself in faith, in loving kindness, and in mercies, in righteousness and in judgment, as Hosea ii says.

Eph. 5:27

Hos. 2:19 f.

Who, then, can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here this rich and godly Bridegroom Christ marries this poor, wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil and adorns her with all His good. It is now impossible that her sins should destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and

swallowed up in Him, and she has that righteousness in Christ her husband of which she may boast as of her own, and which she can confidently set against all her sins in the face of death and hell, and say, "If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in Whom I believe, has not sinned, and all His is mine, and all mine is His"—as the bride in the Song of Solomon says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." This is what Paul means when he says, in I Cor. xv, "Thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,"—that is, the victory over sin and death, as he there says, "the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."

Song of Sol. 2:16

1 Cor. 15:57

1 Cor. 15:56

Faith the Fulfilment of the Law

From this you see once more why so much is ascribed to faith, that it alone may fulfil the law and justify without works. You see that the First Commandment, which says, "Thou shalt worship one God," is fulfilled by faith alone. For though you were nothing but good works from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head, yet you would not be righteous, nor worship God, nor fulfil the First Commandment, since God cannot be worshiped unless you ascribe to Him the glory of truthfulness and of all goodness, which is due Him. And this cannot be done by works, but only by the faith of the heart. For not by the doing of works, but by believing, do we glorify God and acknowledge that He is truthful. Therefore, faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian man and the fulfilling of all the commandments. For he who fulfils the First, has no difficulty in fulfilling all the rest. But works, being insensate things, cannot glorify God, although they can, if faith be present, be done to the glory of God. At present, however, we are not inquiring what works and what sort of works are done, but who it is that does them, who glorifies God and brings forth the works. This is faith which dwells in the heart, and is the head and substance of all our righteousness. Hence, it is a blind and dangerous doctrine which teaches that the commandments must be fulfilled by works. The commandments must be fulfilled before any works can be done, and

the works proceed from the fulfilment of the commandments, as we shall hear. Rom. 13:10

But that we may look more deeply into that grace which our inward man has in Christ, we must consider that in the Old Testament God sanctified to Himself every first-born male, and the birth-right was highly prized, having a two-fold honor, that of priesthood, and that of kingship. For the first-born brother was priest and lord over all the others, and was a type of Christ, the true and only First-born of God the Father and of the Virgin Mary, and true King and Priest, not after the fashion of the flesh and of the world. For His kingdom is not of this world. He reigns in heavenly and spiritual things and consecrates them—such as righteousness, truth, wisdom, peace, salvation, etc. Not as if all things on earth and in hell were not also subject to Him—else how could He protect and save us from them?—but His kingdom consists neither in them nor of them. Nor does His priesthood consist in the outward splendor of robes and postures, like that human priesthood of Aaron and of our present-day Church; but it consists in spiritual things, through which He by an unseen service intercedes for us in heaven before God, there offers Himself as a sacrifice and does all things a priest should do, as Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews describes him under the type of Melchizedek. Nor does He only pray and intercede for us, but within our soul He teaches us through the living teaching of His Spirit, thus performing the two real functions of a priest, of which the prayers and the preaching of human priests are visible types.

Old Testament Types
Ex. 13:2
Num. 3:13
Gen. 49:3
John 18:36
Heb. 6 f.

Now, just as Christ by his birthright obtained these two prerogatives, so He imparts them to and shares them with every one who believes on Him according to the law of the aforesaid marriage, by which the wife owns whatever belongs to the husband. Hence we are all priests and kings in Christ, as many as believe on Christ, as I Pet. ii says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood and priestly kingdom, that ye should show forth

1 Pet. 2:9

the virtues of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The Kingship of the Christian

This priesthood and kingship we explain as follows: First, as to the kingship, every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that by a spiritual power he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm whatever, nay, all things are made subject to him and compelled to serve him to his salvation. Thus Rom. 8:28 Paul says in Rom. viii, "All things work together for good 1 Cor. 3:22 f. to them who are called." And, in I Cor. iii, "All things are yours, whether life or death, or things present or things to come, and ye are Christ's." Not as if every Christian were set over all things, to possess and control them by physical power,—a madness with which some churchmen are afflicted,—for such power belongs to kings, princes and men on earth. Our ordinary experience in life shows us that we are subjected to all, suffer many things and even die; nay, the more Christian a man is, the more evils, sufferings and deaths is he made subject to, as we see in Christ the first-born Prince Himself, and in all His brethren, the saints. The power of which we speak is spiritual; it rules in the midst of enemies, and is mighty in the midst of oppres- 2 Cor. 12:9 sion, which means nothing else than that strength is made perfect in weakness, and that in all things I can find profit Rom. 8:28 unto salvation, so that the cross and death itself are compelled to serve me and to work together with me for my salvation. This is a splendid prerogative and hard to attain, and a true omnipotent power, a spiritual dominion, in which there is nothing so good and nothing so evil, but that it shall work together for good to me, if only I believe. And yet, since faith alone suffices for salvation, I have need of nothing, except that faith exercise the power and dominion of its own liberty. Lo, this is the inestimable power and liberty of Christians.

The Priesthood of the Christian

Not only are we the freest of kings, we are also priests forever, which is far more excellent than being kings, because as priests we are worthy to appear before God to pray

for others and to teach one another the things of God. For these are the functions of priests, and cannot be granted to any unbeliever. Thus Christ has obtained for us, if we believe on Him, that we are not only His brethren, co-heirs and fellow-kings with Him, but also fellow-priests with Him, who may boldly come into the presence of God in the spirit of faith and cry, "Abba, Father!" pray for one another and do all things which we see done and prefigured in the outward and visible works of priests. But he who does not believe is not served by anything, nor does anything work for good to him, but he himself is a servant of all, and all things become evils to him, because he wickedly uses them to his own profit and not to the glory of God. And so he is no priest, but a profane man, whose prayer becomes sin and never comes into the presence of God, because God does not hear sinners. Who then can comprehend the lofty dignity of the Christian? Through his kingly power he rules over all things, death, life and sin, and through his priestly glory is all powerful with God, because God does the things which he asks and desires, as it is written, "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them." To this glory a man attains, surely not by any works of his, but by faith alone.

Heb. 10:19, 22

John 9:31

Phil. 4:13

From this any one can clearly see how a Christian man is free from all things and over all things, so that he needs no works to make him righteous and to save him, since faith alone confers all these things abundantly. But should he grow so foolish as to presume to become righteous, free, saved and a Christian by means of some good work, he would on the instant lose faith and all its benefits: a foolishness aptly illustrated in the fable of the dog who runs along a stream with a piece of meat in his mouth, and, deceived by the reflection of the meat in the water, opens his mouth to snap at it, and so loses both the meat and the reflection.

Distinctions among Christians

You will ask, "If all who are in the Church are priests, how do those whom we now call priests differ from laymen?" I answer: "Injustice is done those words, 'priest,' 'cleric,'

'spiritual,' 'ecclesiastic,' when they are transferred from all other Christians to those few who are now by a mischievous usage called 'ecclesiastics.' For Holy Scripture makes no distinction between them, except that it gives the name 'ministers,' 'servants,' 'stewards,' to those who are now proudly called popes, bishops, and lords and who should by the ministry of the Word serve others and teach them the faith of Christ and the liberty of believers. For although we are all equally priests, yet we cannot all publicly minister and teach, nor ought we if we could." Thus Paul
1 Cor. 4:1 writes in I Cor. iv, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

But that stewardship has now been developed into so great a pomp of power and so terrible a tyranny, that no heathen empire or earthly power can be compared with it, just as if laymen were not also Christians. Through this perversion the knowledge of Christian grace, faith, liberty and of Christ Himself has altogether perished, and its place has been taken by an unbearable bondage of human words
Lam. 1:11 and laws, until we have become, as the Lamentations of Jeremiah say, servants of the vilest men on earth, who abuse our misfortune to serve only their base and shameless will.

How Christ is to be Preached

To return to our purpose, I believe it has now become clear that it is not enough nor is it Christian, to preach the works, life and words of Christ as historical facts, as if the knowledge of these would suffice for the conduct of life, although this is the fashion of those who must to-day be regarded as our best preachers; and far less is it enough or Christian to say nothing at all about Christ and to teach instead the laws of men and the decrees of the Fathers. And now there are not a few who preach Christ and read about Him that they may move men's affections to sympathy with Christ, to anger against the Jews and such like childish and womanish nonsense. Rather ought Christ to be preached to the end that faith in Him may be established, that He may not only be Christ, but be Christ for thee and for me, and that what is said of Him and what His Name

denotes may be effectual in us. And such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what He brought and bestowed,[1] what benefit it is to us to accept Him. This is done when that Christian liberty which He bestows is rightly taught, and we are told in what way we who are Christians are all kings and priests and so are lords of all, and may firmly believe that whatever we have done is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God, as I have said.

Effect of such Preaching

What man is there whose heart, hearing these things, will not rejoice to its very core, and in receiving such comfort grow tender so as to love Christ, as he never could be made to love by any laws or works? Who would have power to harm such a heart or to make it afraid? If the knowledge of sin or the fear of death break in upon it, it is ready to hope in the Lord; it does not grow afraid when it hears tidings of evil, nor is it disturbed until it shall look down upon its enemies. For it believes that the righteousness of Christ is its own, and that its sin is not its own, but Christ's; and that all sin is swallowed up by the righteousness of Christ is, as has been said above, a necessary consequence of faith in Christ. So the heart learns to scoff at death and sin, and to say with the Apostle, "Where, O death, is thy victory? where, O death, is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." For death is swallowed up not only in the victory of Christ, but also by our victory, because through faith His victory has become ours, and in that faith we also are conquerors.

Psalm 112:7 f.

1 Cor. 15:55 ff

Let this suffice concerning the inward man, his liberty and its source, the righteousness of faith,[2] which needs neither laws nor good works, nay, is rather injured by them, if a man trusts that he is justified by them.

[1] German: Wie man sein brauchen und niessen soll, "how we are to benefit by and enjoy what He is for us."

[2] German: der heubt gerechtigkeit.

The Outward Man

Now let us turn to the second part, to the outward man. Here we shall answer all those who, misled by the word "faith" and by all that has been said, now say: "If faith does all things and is alone sufficient unto righteousness, why then are good works commanded? We will take our ease and do no works, and be content with faith." I answer, Not so, ye wicked men, not so. That would indeed be proper, if we were wholly inward and perfectly spiritual men; but such we shall be only at the last day, the day of the resurrection of the dead. As long as we live in the flesh we only begin and make some progress in that which shall be perfected in the future life. For this reason the Apostle, in Romans viii, calls all that we attain in this life "the first fruits" of the spirit, because, forsooth, we shall receive the greater portion, even the fulness of the spirit, in the future. This is the place for that which was said above, that a Christian man is the servant of all and made subject to all. For in so far as he is free he does no works, but in so far as he is a servant he does all manner of works. How this is possible, we shall see.

Rom. 8: 23

Needs to do Works

Although, as I have said, a man is abundantly justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he ought to have, except in so far as this faith and riches must grow from day to day even unto the future life: yet he remains in this mortal life on earth, and in this life he must needs govern his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot take his ease; here he must, indeed, take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors and other reasonable discipline, and to make it subject to the spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inward man and to faith, and not revolt against faith and hinder the inward man, as it is the body's nature to do if it be not held in check. For the inward man, who by faith is created in the likeness of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in Whom so many benefits are conferred upon him, and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and for naught, in love that is not constrained.

While he is doing this, lo, he meets a contrary will in his own flesh, which strives to serve the world and to seek its own advantage. This the spirit of faith cannot tolerate, and with joyful zeal it attempts to put the body under and to hold it in check, as Paul says in Romans vii, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin"; and, in another place, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," and in Galatians, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its lusts."

Rom. 7:22 f.

1 Cor. 9:27

Gal. 5:24

Works do not Justify

In doing these works, however, we must not think that a man is justified before God by them: for that erroneous opinion faith, which alone is righteousness before God, cannot endure; but we must think that these works reduce the body to subjection and purify it of its evil lusts, and our whole purpose is to be directed only toward the driving out of lusts. For since by faith the soul is cleansed and made a lover of God, it desires that all things, and especially its own body, shall be as pure as itself, so that all things may join with it in loving and praising God. Hence a man cannot be idle, because the need of his body drives him and he is compelled to do many good works to reduce it to subjection. Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God, and considers nothing except the approval of God, Whom he would in all things most scrupulously obey.

In this way every one will easily be able to learn for himself the limit and discretion, as they say, of his bodily castigations: for he will fast, watch and labor as much as he finds sufficient to repress the lasciviousness and lust of his body. But they who presume to be justified by works do not regard the mortifying of the lusts, but only the works themselves, and think that if only they have done as many

and as great works as are possible, they have done well, and have become righteousness; at times they even addle their brains and destroy, or at least render useless, their natural strength with their works. This is the height of folly, and utter ignorance of Christian life and faith, that a man should seek to be justified and saved by works and without faith.

An Analogy

In order that what we have said may be more easily understood, we will explain it by analogies. We should think of the works of a Christian man who is justified and saved by faith because of the pure and free mercy of God, just as we would think of the works which Adam and Eve did in Paradise, and all their children would have done if they had not sinned. We read in Genesis ii, "God put the man whom He had formed into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Now Adam was created by God righteous and upright and without sin, so that he had no need of being justified and made upright through his dressing and keeping the garden, but, that he might not be idle, the Lord gave him a work to do—to cultivate and to protect the garden. These would truly have been the freest of works, done only to please God and not to obtain righteousness, which Adam already had in full measure, and which would have been the birthright of us all.

Gen. 2: 15

Such also are the works of a believer. Through his faith he has been restored to Paradise and created anew, has no need of works that he may become or be righteous; but that he may not be idle and may provide for and keep his body, he must do such works freely only to please God; only, since we are not wholly re-created, and our faith and love are not yet perfect, these are to be increased, not by external works, however, but within themselves.

A Second Analogy

Again: A bishop, when he consecrates a Church, confirms children or performs any other duty belonging to his office, is not made a bishop by these works; nay, if he had not first been made a bishop, none of these works would be valid, they would be foolish, childish and a mere farce. So the Christian, who is consecrated by his faith, does good

works, but the works do not make him more holy or more Christian; for that is the work of faith alone, and if a man were not first a believer and a Christian, all his works would amount to nothing at all and would be truly wicked and damnable sins.

These two sayings, therefore, are true: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works"; so that it is always necessary that the "substance" or person itself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ also says, "A corrupt tree does not bring forth good fruit, a good tree does not bring forth evil fruit." Matt. 7:18 It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree, nor does the tree grow on the fruits, but, on the contrary, the trees bear the fruits and the fruits grow on the trees. As it is necessary, therefore, that the trees must exist before their fruits, and the fruits do not make trees either good or corrupt, but rather as the trees are so are the fruits they bear; so the person of a man must needs first be good or wicked before he does a good or a wicked work, and his works do not make him good or wicked, but he himself makes his works either good or wicked.

Illustrations of the same truth can be seen in all trades. A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad builder, but a good or a bad builder makes a bad or a good house. And in general, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself. So it is also with the works of man: as the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work—good, if it was done in faith; wicked, if it was done in unbelief. But the converse is not true, that the work makes the man either a believer or an unbeliever. For as works do not make a man a believer, so also they do not make him righteous. But as faith makes a man a believer and righteous, so faith also does good works. Since, then, works justify no one, and a man must be righteous before he does a good work, Illustrations

it is very evident that it is faith alone which, because of the pure mercy of God through Christ and in His Word, worthily and sufficiently justifies and saves the person, and a Christian man has no need of any work or of any law in order to be saved, since through faith he is free from every law and does all that he does out of pure liberty and freely, seeking neither benefit nor salvation, since he already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because of his faith, and now seeks only to please God.

Works Neither Save nor Damn

Furthermore, no good work helps an unbeliever, so as to justify or save him. And, on the other hand, no evil work makes him wicked or damns him, but the unbelief which makes the person and the tree evil, does the evil and damnable works. Hence when a man is made good or evil, this is effected not by the works, but by faith or unbelief, as the Wise Man says, "This is the beginning of sin, that a man falls away from God," which happens when he does not believe. And Paul, Hebrews xi, says, He that cometh to God must believe." And Christ says the same: "Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt," as if He would say, "Let him who would have good fruit begin by planting a good tree." So let him who would do good works not begin with the doing of works, but with believing, which makes the person good. For nothing makes a man good except faith, nor evil except unbelief.

Sirach 10:14 f.

Heb. 11:6

Matt. 12:33

It is indeed true that in the sight of men a man is made good or evil by his works, but this being made good or evil is no more than that he who is good or evil is pointed out and known as such; as Christ says, in Matthew vii, "By their fruits ye shall know them." But all this remains on the surface, and very many have been deceived by this outward appearance and have presumed to write and teach concerning good works by which we may be justified, without even mentioning faith; they go their way, always being deceived and deceiving, advancing, indeed, but into a worse state, blind leaders of the blind, wearying them-

Matt. 7:20

2 Tim. 3:13

selves with many works, and yet never attaining to true righteousness. Of such Paul says, in II Timothy iii, "Having the form of godliness, but denying its power, always learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth." Matt. 15:14 2 Tim. 3:5, 7

He, therefore, who does not wish to go astray with those blind men, must look beyond works, and laws and doctrines about works; nay, turning his eyes from works, he must look upon the person, and ask how that is justified. For the person is justified and saved not by works nor by laws, but by the Word of God, that is, by the promise of His grace, and by faith, that the glory may remain God's, Who saved us not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy by the word of His grace, when we believed. Tit. 3:5 1 Cor. 1:21

The Doctrine of Good Works

From this it is easy to know in how far good works are to be rejected or not, and by what standard all the teachings of men concerning works are to be interpreted. If works are sought after as a means to righteousness, are burdened with this perverse leviathan[1] and are done under the false impression that through them you are justified, they are made necessary and freedom and faith are destroyed; and this addition to them makes them to be no longer good, but truly damnable works. For they are not free, and they blaspheme the grace of God, since to justify and to save by faith belongs to the grace of God alone. What the works have no power to do, they yet, by a godless presumption, through this folly of ours, pretend to do, and thus violently force themselves into the office and the glory of grace. We do not, therefore, reject good works; on the contrary, we cherish and teach them as much as possible. We do not condemn them for their own sake, but because of this godless addition to them and the perverse idea that righteousness is to be sought through them; for that makes them appear good outwardly, when in truth they are not

[1] Possibly a reminiscence of the Leviathan serpentem tortuosum in Isa. 27 : 1. Cf. Erl. Ed., lxiv, 73; xxvii, 323 f; xviii, 91. Lemme translates Teufelswahn.

Matt. 7:15 good; they deceive men and lead men to deceive each other, like ravening wolves in sheep's clothing.

But this leviathan and perverse notion concerning works is insuperable where sincere faith is wanting. Those works-saints cannot get rid of it unless faith, its destroyer, come and rule in their hearts. Nature of itself cannot drive it out, nor even recognize it, but rather regards it as a mark of the most holy will. And if the influence of custom be added and confirm this perverseness of nature, as wicked Magisters have caused it to do, it becomes an incurable evil, and leads astray and destroys countless men beyond all hope of restoration. Therefore, although it is good to preach and write about penitence, confession and satisfaction, if we stop with that and do not go on to teach about faith, our teaching is unquestionably deceitful and devilish.

Matt. 3:2; 4:17 Christ, like His forerunner John, not only said, "Repent ye," but added the word of faith, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And we are not to preach only one of these words of God, but both; we are to bring forth out Matt. 13:52 of our treasure things new and old, the voice of the law as **What we are to Preach** well as the word of grace. We must bring forth the voice of the law that men may be made to fear and to come to a knowledge of their sins, and so be converted to repentance and a better life. But we must not stop with that. For that would be only to wound and not to bind up, to smite and not to heal, to kill and not to make alive, to lead down into hell and not to bring back again, to humble and not to exalt. Therefore, we must also preach the word of grace and the promise of forgiveness, by which faith is taught and strengthened. Without this word of grace the works of the law, contrition, penitence and all the rest are performed and taught in vain.

There remain even to our day preachers of repentance and grace, but they do not so explain God's law and promise that a man might learn from them the source of repentance and grace. For repentance proceeds from the law of God, but faith or grace from the promise of God, as

Romans x says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"; so that a man is consoled and exalted by faith in the divine promise, after he has been humbled and led to a knowledge of himself by the threats and the fear of the divine law. So we read in Psalm xxx, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Rom. 10:17 Ps. 30:5

Let this suffice concerning works in general, and at the same time concerning the works which a Christian does for his own body. Lastly, we will also speak of the things which he does toward his neighbor. A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body, so as to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth, nay, rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. And to this end he brings his body into subjection, that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others, as Paul says in Romans xiv, "No one lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For he that liveth, liveth unto the Lord, and he that dieth, dieth unto the Lord." Therefore, it is impossible that he should ever in this life be idle and without works toward his neighbors. For of necessity he will speak, deal with and converse with men, as Christ also, being made in the likeness of men, was found in form as a man, and conversed with men, as Baruch iii says. **Works of Love** Rom. 14:7 f. Phil. 2:7 Bar. 3:38

But none of these things does a man need for his righteousness and salvation. Therefore, in all his works he should be guided by this thought and look to this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, having regard to nothing except the need and the advantage of his neighbor. Thus, the Apostle commands us to work with our hands that we may give to him who is in need, although he might have said that we should work to support ourselves; he says, however, "that he may have to give to him that needeth." And this is what makes it a Christian work to care for the body, that through its health and comfort we may be able to work, to acquire and to lay by funds with which to aid those who are in need, that in this way the strong member may serve the weaker, and we may **Do not Save** Eph. 4:28

Gal. 6:2 be sons of God, each caring for and working for the other, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of
Gal. 5:6 Christ. Lo, this is a truly Christian life, here faith is truly
Grow out of Faith effectual through love; that is, it issues in works of the freest service cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward, and for himself is satisfied with the fulness and wealth of his faith.

So Paul after teaching the Philippians how rich they were made through faith in Christ, in which they obtained all things, proceeds immediately to teach them further,
Phil. 2:1 ff. saying, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, thinking nothing through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness each esteeming the other better than themselves; looking not every man on his own things, but on the things of others." Here we see clearly that the Apostle has prescribed this rule for the life of Christians,—that we should devote all our works to the welfare of others, since each has such abundant riches in his faith, that all his other works and his whole life are a surplus with which he can by voluntary benevolence serve and do good to his neighbor.

As an example of such a life the Apostle cites Christ, saying, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ
Phil. 2:5 ff. Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery
The Example of Christ to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death." This salutary word of the Apostle has been obscured for us by those who have not at all understood the Apostle's words, "form of God," "form of a servant," "fashion," "likeness of men," and have applied them to the divine and the human nature. Paul means this: Although Christ was filled with the form of God and rich in all good things, so that He needed no work and no suffering to make Him righteous and saved (for He had all this always from the beginning), yet He was not puffed

up by them, nor did He lift Himself up above us and assume power over us, although He could rightly have done so; but, on the contrary, He so lived, labored, worked, suffered and died, that He might be like other men, and in fashion and in actions be nothing else than a man, just as if He had need of all these things and had nothing of the form of God. But He did all this for our sake, that He might serve us, and that all things He accomplished in this form of a servant might become ours.

So a Christian, like Christ, his Head, is filled and made rich by faith, and should be content with this form of God which he has obtained by faith; only, as I have said, he ought to increase this faith until it be made perfect. For this faith is his life, his righteousness and his salvation: it saves him and makes him acceptable, and bestows upon him all things that are Christ's, as has been said above, and as Paul asserts in Gal. ii, when he says, "And the life which Gal. 2:20
I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, to take upon himself the form of a servant, to be made in the likeness of men, to be found in fashion as a man, and to serve, help and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with himself. And this he should do freely, having regard to nothing except the divine approval. He ought to think: "Though I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that henceforth I need nothing whatever except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will, do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father, Who has overwhelmed me with His inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered Himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable and salutary to

my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."

Faith and Love

Lo, thus from faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations, he does not distinguish between friends and enemies, nor does he anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness; but most freely and most willingly he spends himself and all that he has, whether he waste all on the thankless or whether he gain a reward. For as his Father does, distributing all things to all men richly and freely, causing His sun to rise upon the good and upon the evil, so also the son does all things and suffers all things with that freely bestowing joy which is his delight when through Christ he sees it in God, the dispenser of such great benefits.

Matt. 5:45

Therefore, if we recognize the great and precious things which are given us, as Paul says, there will be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost the love which makes us free, joyful, almighty workers and conquerors over all tribulations, servants of our neighbors and yet lords of all. But for those who do not recognize the gifts bestowed upon them through Christ, Christ has been born in vain; they go their way with their works, and shall never come to taste or to feel those things. Just as our neighbor is in need and lacks that in which we abound, so we also have been in need before God and have lacked His mercy. Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our help, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each should become as it were a Christ to the other, that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all; that is, that we may be truly Christians.

Rom. 5:5

The Christian Serves Freely

Who then can comprehend the riches and the glory of the Christian life? It can do all things, and has all things, and lacks nothing; it is lord over sin, death and hell, and yet

at the same time it serves, ministers to and benefits all men. But, alas, in our day this life is unknown throughout the world; it is neither preached about nor sought after; we are altogether ignorant of our own name and do not know why we are Christians or bear the name of Christians. Surely we are so named after Christ, not because He is absent from us, but because He dwells in us, that is, because we believe on Him and are Christs one to another and do to our neighbors as Christ does to us. But in our day we are taught by the doctrine of men to seek naught but merits, rewards and the things that are ours; of Christ we have made only a taskmaster far more harsh than Moses.

Examples: The Virgin

Of such faith we have a pre-eminent example in the blessed Virgin. As is written in Luke ii, she was purified according to the law of Moses, after the custom of all women, although she was not bound by that law, and needed not to be purified. But out of free and willing love she submitted to the law, being made like other women, lest she should offend or despise them. She was not justified by this work, but being righteous she did it freely and willingly. So our works also should be done, not that we may be justified by them; since, being justified beforehand by faith, we ought to do all things freely and joyfully for the sake of others.

Luke 2:22 ff.

St. Paul

St. Paul also circumcised his disciple Timothy, not because circumcision was necessary for his righteousness, but that he might not offend or despise the Jews who were weak in the faith and could not yet grasp the liberty of faith. But on the other hand, when they despised the liberty of faith and insisted that circumcision was necessary for righteousness, he withstood them and did not allow Titus to be circumcised, (Gal. ii). For as he was unwilling to offend or to despise any man's weak faith, and yielded to their will for the time, so he was also unwilling that the liberty of faith should be offended against or despised by stubborn work-righteous men. He chose a middle way, sparing the weak for a time, but always withstanding the stubborn, that he

Acts 16:3

Gal. 2:3

might convert all to the liberty of faith. What we do should be done with the same zeal to sustain the weak in faith, as Romans xiv teaches; but we should firmly withstand the stubborn teachers of works. Of this we will say more later.

Rom. 14:1 ff.

Matt. 17:24 ff.

Christ

Christ also, in Matthew xvii, when the tribute money was demanded of His disciples, argued with St. Peter, whether the sons of the king were not free from the payment of tribute, and Peter affirmed that they were. None the less Christ commanded Peter to go to the sea, and said, "Lest we should offend them, go, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." This incident fits beautifully to our subject, since Christ here calls Himself and those that are His, children and sons of the King, who need nothing; and yet He freely submits and pays the tribute. Just as necessary or helpful as this work was to Christ's righteousness or salvation, just so much do all other works of His or of His followers avail for righteousness; since they all follow after righteousness and are free, and are done only to serve others and to give them an example of good works.

Rom. 13:1 ff.

Tit. 3:1

Of the same nature are the precepts which Paul gives, in Romans xiii and Titus iii, that Christians should be subject to the powers that be, and be ready to do every good work, not that they shall in this way be justified, since they already are righteous through faith, but that in the liberty of the Spirit they shall by so doing serve others and the powers themselves, and obey their will freely and out of love. Of this nature should be the works of all colleges, monasteries and priests. Each one should do the works of his profession and position, not that by them he may strive after righteousness, but that through them he may keep under his body, be an example to others, who also need to keep under their bodies, and finally that by such works he may submit his will to that of others in the freedom of love. But very great care must always be taken that no man in a false confidence

imagine that by such works he will be justified, or acquire merit or be saved; for this is the work of faith alone, as I have repeatedly said.

Any one knowing this could easily and without danger find his way among those numberless mandates and precepts of pope, bishops, monasteries, churches, princes and magistrates, upon which some ignorant pastors insist as if they were necessary to righteousness and salvation, calling them "precepts of the Church," although they are nothing of the kind. For a Christian, as a free man, will say, "I will fast, pray, do this and that as men command, not because it is necessary to my righteousness or salvation; but that I may show due respect to the pope, the bishop, the community, some magistrate or my neighbor, and give them an example, I will do and suffer all things, just as Christ did and suffered far more for me, although He needed nothing of it all for Himself, and was made under the law for my sake, although He was not under the law." And although tyrants do violence or injustice in making their demands, yet it will do no harm, so long as they demand nothing contrary to God. Church Precepts

From what has been said, every one can pass a safe judgment on all works and laws and make a trustworthy distinction between them, and know who are the blind and ignorant pastors and who are the good and true. For any work that is not done solely for the purpose of keeping under the body or of serving one's neighbor, so long as he asks nothing contrary to God, is not good nor Christian. And for this reason I mightily fear that few or no colleges, monasteries, altars and offices of the Church are really Christian in our day: no, nor the special fasts and prayers on certain saints' days[1] either. I fear, I say, that in all these we seek only our own profit, thinking that through them our sins are purged away and that we find salvation in them. In this way Christian liberty perishes altogether. And this comes from our ignorance of Christian faith and of liberty.

[1] German: die fasten und gepett etlichen heyligen sonderlich gethan.

Ignorance of Liberty

This ignorance and suppression of liberty very many blind pastors take pains to encourage: they stir up and urge on their people in these practices by praising such works, puffing them up with their indulgences, and never teaching faith. But I would counsel you, if you wish to pray, fast or establish some foundation in the Church, take heed not to do it in order to obtain some benefit, whether temporal or eternal. For you would do injury to your faith, which alone offers you all things. Your one care should be that faith may increase, whether it be trained by works or by sufferings. Give your gifts freely and for nothing, that others may profit by them and fare well because of you and your goodness. In this way you shall be truly good and Christian. For of what benefit to you are the good works which you do not need for the keeping under of your body? Your faith is sufficient for you, through which God has given you all things.

See, according to this rule the good things we have from God should flow from one to the other and be common to all, so that every one should "put on" his neighbor, and so conduct himself toward him as if he himself were in the other's place. From Christ they have flowed and are flowing into us: He has so "put on" us and acted for us as if He had been what we are. From us they flow on to those who have need of them, so that I should lay before God my faith and my righteousness that they may cover and intercede for the sins of my neighbor, which I take upon myself and so labor and serve in them as if they were my very own. For that is what Christ did for us. This is true love and the genuine rule of a Christian life. The love is true and genuine where there is true and genuine faith. Hence, the Apostle says of love in I Cor. xiii, that it seeketh not its own.

1 Cor. 13:5

Conclusion

We conclude, therefore, that a Christian man lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love; by faith he is caught up beyond himself into God, by love he sinks down beneath himself into his

neighbor; yet he always remains in God and in His love, as Christ says in John i, "Verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." John 1:51

Enough now of liberty. As you see, it is a spiritual and true liberty, and makes our hearts free from all sins, laws and mandates, as Paul says, I Tim. i, "The law is not made for a righteous man." 1 Tim. 1:9 It is more excellent than all other liberty which is external, as heaven is more excellent than earth. This liberty may Christ grant us both to understand and to preserve. Amen.

Liberty

Finally, something must be added for the sake of those for whom nothing can be so well said that they will not spoil it by misunderstanding it, though it is a question whether they will understand even what shall here be said. There are very many who, when they hear of this liberty of faith, immediately turn it into an occasion for the flesh, and think that now all things are allowed them. They want to show that they are free men and Christians only by despising and finding fault with ceremonies, traditions and human laws; as if they were Christians because on stated days they do not fast or eat meat when others fast, or because they do not use the accustomed prayers, and with upturned nose scoff at the precepts of men, although they utterly disregard all else that pertains to the Christian religion. The extreme opposite of these are those who rely for their salvation solely on their reverent observance of ceremonies, as if they would be saved because on certain days they fast or abstain from meats, or pray certain prayers; these make a boast of the precepts of the Church and of the Fathers, and care not a fig for the things which are of the essence of our faith. Plainly, both are in error, because they neglect the weightier things which are necessary to salvation, and quarrel so noisily about those trifling and unnecessary matters.

Neither License

Nor Necessity

How much better is the teaching of the Apostle Paul, who bids us take a middle course, and condemns both sides when he says, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth Rom. 14:3

not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth." Here you see that they who neglect and disparage ceremonies, not out of piety, but out of mere contempt, are reproved, since the Apostle teaches us not to despise them. Such men are puffed up by knowledge. On the other hand, he teaches those who insist on the ceremonies not to judge the others, for neither party acts toward the other according to the love that edifies. Wherefore, we ought here to listen to the Scriptures, which teach that we should not go aside to the right nor to the left, but follow the statutes of the Lord which are right, rejoicing the heart. For as a man is not righteous because he keeps and clings to the works and forms of the ceremonies, so also will a man not be counted righteous merely because he neglects and despises them.

Deut. 28:14
Ps. 19:8

Freedom from False Opinions

Our faith in Christ does not free us from works, but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works. For faith redeems, corrects and preserves our consciences, so that we know that righteousness does not consist in works, although works neither can nor ought to be wanting; just as we cannot be without food and drink and all the works of this mortal body, yet our righteousness is not in them, but in faith; and yet those works of the body are not to be despised or neglected on that account. In this world we are bound by the needs of our bodily life, but we are not righteous because of them. "My kingdom is not of this world," says Christ, but He does not say, "My kingdom is not here, that is, in this world." And Paul says, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh," and in Galatians ii, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God." Thus what we do, live, and are in works and in ceremonies, we do because of the necessities of this life and of the effort to rule our body; nevertheless we are righteous not in these, but in the faith of the Son of God.

John 18:36
2 Cor. 10:3
Gal. 2:20

Opponents

Hence, the Christian must take a middle course and face those two classes of men. He will meet first the unyielding, stubborn ceremonialists, who like deaf adders are not willing

Ps. 58:4

to hear the truth of liberty, but, having no faith, boast of, prescribe and insist upon their ceremonies as means of justification. Such were the Jews of old, who were unwilling to learn how to do good. These he must resist, do the very opposite and offend them boldly, lest by their impious views they drag many with them into error. In the presence of such men it is good to eat meat, to break the fasts and for the sake of the liberty of faith to do other things which they regard the greatest of sins. Of them we must say, "Let them alone, they are blind and leaders of the blind." For on this principle Paul would not circumcise Titus when the Jews insisted that he should, and Christ excused the Apostles when they plucked ears of corn on the sabbath; and there are many similar instances. The other class of men whom a Christian will meet, are the simple-minded, ignorant men, weak in the faith, as the Apostle calls them, who cannot yet grasp the liberty of faith, even if they were willing to do so. These he must take care not to offend; he must yield to their weakness until they are more fully instructed. For since these do and think as they do, not because they are stubbornly wicked, but only because their faith is weak, the fasts and other things which they think necessary must be observed to avoid giving them offence. For so love demands, which would harm no one, but would serve all men. It is not by their fault that they are weak, but their pastors have taken them captive with the snares of their traditions and have wickedly used these traditions as rods with which to beat them. From these pastors they should have been delivered by the teaching of faith and liberty. So the Apostle teaches us, Romans xiv, "If my meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth"; and again, "I know that through Christ nothing is unclean, except to him who esteemeth any thing to be unclean; but it is evil for the man who eats and is offended."

Ceremonialists

Matt. 15:14

Gal. 2:3

Matt. 12:1 ff.

Ignorant Men

Rom. 14:1

Rom. 14:15

1 Cor. 8:13

Rom. 14:14

Wherefore, although we should boldly resist those teachers of traditions and sharply censure the laws of the popes by means of which they plunder the people of God, yet we

must spare the timid multitude whom those impious tyrants hold captive by means of these laws, until they be set free. Fight strenuously therefore against the wolves, but for the sheep, and not also against the sheep. This you will do if you inveigh against the laws and the law-givers, and at the same time observe the laws with the weak, so that they will not be offended, until they also recognize the tyranny and understand their liberty. But if you wish to use your liberty, do so in secret, as Paul says, Romans xiv, "Hast thou the faith? have it to thyself before God"; but take care not to use your liberty in the sight of the weak. On the other hand, use your liberty constantly and consistently in the sight of the tyrants and the stubborn, in despite of them, that they also may learn that they are impious, that their laws are of no avail for righteousness, and that they had no right to set them up.

Rom. 14:22

Ceremonies

Now, since we cannot live our life without ceremonies and works, and the froward and untrained youth need to be restrained and saved from harm by such bonds; and since each one should keep his body under by means of such works, there is need that the minister of Christ be far-seeing and faithful; he ought so to govern and teach the people of Christ in all these matters that their conscience and faith be not offended, and that there spring not up in them a suspicion and a root of bitterness, and many be defiled thereby, as Paul admonishes the Hebrews; that is, that they may not lose faith and become defiled by the false estimate of the value of works, and think that they must be justified by works. This happens easily and defiles very many, unless faith is at the same time constantly taught; it is impossible to avoid it when faith is not mentioned and only the devisings of men are taught, as has been done until now through the pestilent, impious, soul-destroying traditions of our popes and the opinions of our theologians. By these snares numberless souls have been dragged down to hell, so that you might see in this the work of Antichrist.

Heb. 12:15

In brief, as wealth is the test of poverty, business the test

of faithfulness, honors the test of humility, feasts the test of temperance, pleasures the test of chastity, so ceremonies are the test of the righteousness of faith. "Can a man," says Solomon, "take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" Yet, as a man must live in the midst of wealth, business, honors, pleasures and feasts, so also must he live in the midst of ceremonies, that is, in the midst of dangers. Nay, as infant boys need beyond all else to be cherished in the bosoms and by the hands of maidens to keep them from perishing, and yet when they are grown up their salvation is endangered if they associate with maidens, so the inexperienced and froward youth need to be restrained and trained by the iron bars of ceremonies, lest their unchecked ardor rush headlong into vice after vice. Yet it would be death for them to be always held in bondage to ceremonies, thinking that these justify them. They are rather to be taught that they have been so imprisoned in ceremonies, not that they should be made righteous or gain great merit by them, but that they might thus be kept from doing evil, and might be more easily instructed unto the righteousness of faith. Such instruction they would not endure if the impulsiveness of their youth were not restrained. Hence ceremonies are to be given the same place in the life of a Christian as models and plans have among builders and artisans. They are prepared not as permanent structures, but because without them nothing could be built or made. When the structure is completed they are laid aside. You see, they are not despised, rather, they are greatly sought after; but what we despise is the false estimate of them, since no one holds them to be the real and permanent structure. If any man were so egregiously foolish as to care for nothing all his life long except the most costly, careful and persistent preparation of plans and models, and never to think of the structure itself, and were satisfied with his work in producing such plans and mere aids to work, and boasted of it, would not all men pity his insanity, and estimate that with what he has wasted something great might have been built?

The Test of Faith

Prov. 6:27

Temporary Helps

Thus we do not despise ceremonies and works, nay, we set great store by them; but we despise the false estimate placed upon works, in order that no one may think that they are true righteousness, as those hypocrites believe who spend and lose their whole lives in zeal for works, and never reach that for the sake of which the works are to be done; as the
2 Tim. 3:7 Apostle says, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." For they seem to wish to build, they make their preparations, and yet they never build.
2 Tim. 3:5 Thus they remain caught in the form of godliness and do not attain unto its power. Meanwhile they are pleased with their efforts, and even dare to judge all others whom they do not see shining with a like show of works. Yet with the gifts of God which they have spent and abused in vain they might, if they had been filled with faith, have accomplished great things to the salvation of themselves and of others.

Men Need to be Taught of God

But since human nature and natural reason, as it is called, are by nature superstitious and ready to imagine, when laws and works are prescribed, that righteousness must be obtained through them; and further, since they are trained and confirmed in this opinion by the practice of all earthly lawgivers, it is impossible that they should of themselves escape from the slavery of works and come to a knowledge of the liberty of faith. Therefore there is need of the
John 6:45 prayer that the Lord may give us and make us theodidacti, that is, taught of God, and Himself, as He has promised, write His law in our hearts; otherwise there is no
1 Cor. 2:7 hope for us. For if He Himself do not teach our hearts this wisdom hidden in a mystery, nature can only condemn it and judge it to be heretical, because nature is offended by it and regards it as foolishness. So we see that it happened in olden times, in the case of the Apostles and prophets, and so godless and blind popes and their flatterers do to me and to those who are like me. May God at last be merciful to them and to us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that
Ps. 67:1 f. 2 Cor. 11:31 we may know His way upon earth, His salvation among all nations, God, Who is blessed forever. Amen.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION

(EINE KURZE FORM)

OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE CREED, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

1520

INTRODUCTION

THE work here presented bears the German title, Eine kurze Form der zehn Gebote, eine kurze Form des Glaubens, eine kurze Form des Vaterunsers. It is the most important of Luther's catechetical works prior to the Catechisms of 1529, and deserves the name that has been given it, "the first evangelical catechism."[1]

To be sure, the name "catechism" was not applied to the Kurze Form at the time. In mediæval usage "catechism" was the name for oral instruction in the elements of Christian truth. This instruction had been based from time immemorial upon the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The decalogue held a minor place and was overshadowed by the commandments of the church. During the later Middle Ages the influence of the sacrament of penance gave it a higher position. It gradually became a subject of "catechetical" instruction, but only alongside of the other standards for the classification of sins.[2] It was the work of Luther so to expound the Ten Commandments as to give them a permanent place of their own in Christian instruction, side by side with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

The first manuals of instruction of this kind were prepared for the use of the priests, to guide them in the questioning of penitents, but with the discovery of the art of printing popular hand-books for the use of the laity became more and more common, and with certain of these manuals Luther was familiar.[3]

From the beginning of his ministry at Wittenberg, Luther had preached from time to time upon the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. In 1518 his friend Agricola published a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer which Luther had preached in Lent, 1517.[4] In the same year Luther published his own Kurze Auslegung der zehn Gebote, ihrer Erfüllung und Uebertretung.[5] The year 1519 saw the publication of the Kurze Form das Paternoster zu verstehen und zu beten,[6] and the Kurze und gute

[1] COHRS, Evang. Katechismusversuche, I, 4.
[2] VON ZEZSCHWITZ, Katechetik, II, 176, 265 ff.
[3] Weimar Ed., X', 475.
[4] Weimar Ed., IX, 122 ff. The same series was republished by Luther himself, ibid., IV, 74 ff.
[5] Weimar Ed., I, 248 ff.
[6] Weimar Ed., VI, 9 ff.

Auslegung des Vaterunsers vor sich und hinter sich.[1] The Treatise on Good Works,[2] which is essentially an exposition of the decalogue, was written in the early months of 1520. During the same period the mind of Luther was frequently occupied with the abuses of the confessional, as we learn from the Confitendi Ratio,[3] and the Kurze Unterweisung wie man beichten soll.[4] All the material for the first and third parts of the present work was, therefore, in hand and had appeared in print before 1520.

In 1520 the Kurze Form came from the press.[5] It consists of three separately composed expositions of the three chief subjects of catechetical instruction in the Middle Ages. The expositions of the Commandments and the Lord's Prayer are reproductions of the Kurze Auslegung der zehn Gebote and the Kurze Form das Paternoster zu verstehen und zu beten. The treatment of the Apostles' Creed is new, as is also the Introduction, in which Luther sets forth the relation of the three parts to one another in the unity of the Christian life.

The work is not scientific and theological, but popular and religious. Its purpose is primarily devotional, not pedagogical. The mediæval root out of which it grew is not to be denied. The catalogue of transgressions and fulfilments attached to the explanation of the decalogue shows that it is intended to be a manual for penitents, but the spirit in which the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are explained is not mediæval, and the manner in which the explanations of the decalogue are simplified and rid of the excrescences of the XV Century hand-books shows the new evangelical conception of confession to which Luther had attained. The division of the Creed into three articles instead of the traditional twelve marks an epoch in the development of catechetical instruction. The little book contains passages of rare beauty, clouded at times, we fear, by the new language into which it has here been put, and seldom has the Wesen des Christentums been more simply and tellingly set forth than in the treatment of the Creed.

In 1522 Luther republished the Kurze Form with a few slight changes and a number of additions under the title Betbüchlein. The Betbüchlein ran through many editions, and grew in the end to a book of rather large proportions, a complete manual of devotion.

In its original form and as the chief content of the Betbüchlein, the Kurze Form exercised a profound influence upon the manuals of Christian doctrine that appeared in ever-increasing number after 1522.[6]

[1] Weimar Ed., VI, 20 ff.
[2] Vol. I, pp. 187 ff.
[3] Vol. I, pp. 81–101.
[4] Weimar Ed., II, 47 ff.
[5] On the exact date, see Weimar Ed., VII, 195; Clemen, II, 38.
[6] See Cohrs, IV, 326 ff.

Its influence extended to England, where Marshall's Goodly Primer (1534 and 35) offered to English readers a translation of the Betbüchlein, in which, however, no acknowledgments were made to the original author.[1]

The Kurze Form is found in Weimar Ed., VII, 194 ff.; Erl. Ed., XXII, 3 ff.; Clemen Ed., II, 38 ff.; Walch Ed., X, 182 ff.; St. Louis Ed., X, 149 ff.

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F. Cohrs, Die evang. Katechismusversuche vor L.'s Enchiridion (especially I, 1 ff. and IV, 229 ff.), Arts. Katechismen L.'s and Katechismusunterricht in Realencyk., X, 130 ff., and XXIII, 743 ff., and Introd. to Betbüchlein in Weimar Ed., X; O. Albrecht, Vorbemerkungen zu den beiden Katechismen von 1529, in Weimar Ed., XXX', 426 ff. (Further literature cited by all the above.) See also Geffcken, Bilderkatechismus d. XV Jh. and von Zezschwitz, System d. Katechetik (especially II, 1).

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[1] For this information I am indebted to the Rev. J. F. Bornhold, of Mount Holly, N. J. The fact was discovered almost simultaneously by Prof. M. Reu, of Dubuque, Iowa.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION

OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE CREED, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

1520

PREFACE

THE ordinary Christian, who cannot read the Scriptures, is required to learn and know the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; and this has not come to pass without God's special ordering. For these three contain fully and completely everything that is in the Scriptures, everything that ever should be preached, and everything that a Christian needs to know, all put so briefly and so plainly that no one can make complaint or excuse, saying that what he needs for his salvation is too long or too hard to remember.

Three things a man needs to know in order to be saved. First, he must know what he ought to do and what he ought not to do. Second, when he finds that by his own strength he can neither do the things he ought, nor leave undone the things he ought not to do, he must know where to seek and find and get the strength he needs. Third, he must know how to seek and find and get this strength.

When a man is ill, he needs to know first what his illness is,—what he can do and what he cannot do. Then he needs to know where to find the remedy that will restore his health and help him to do and leave undone the things he ought. Third, he must ask for this remedy, and seek it, and get it or have it brought to him. In like manner, the Commandments teach a man to know his

illness, so that he feels and sees what he can do and what he cannot do, what he can and what he cannot leave undone, and thus knows himself to be a sinner and a wicked man. After that the Creed shows him and teaches him where he may find the remedy,—the grace which helps him to become a good man and to keep the Commandments; it shows him God, and the mercy which He has revealed and offered in Christ. In the third place, the Lord's Prayer teaches him how to ask for this grace, get it, and take it to himself, to wit, by habitual, humble, comforting prayer; then grace is given, and by the fulfilment of God's commandments he is saved.

These are the three chief things in all the Scriptures. Therefore we begin at the beginning, with the Commandments, which are the first thing, and learn to recognise our sin and wickedness, that is, our spiritual illness, which prevents us from doing the things we ought to do and leaving undone the things we ought not to do.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The First Table

The First Table of Moses — the Table of the Right Hand—contains the first three Commandments. In these man is taught his duty toward God, what things he is in duty bound to do, and what to leave undone.

The First Commandment

The First Commandment teaches how man shall treat God inwardly, in the heart, that is, how he ought always to remember Him and think of Him and esteem Him. To Him, as to a Father and good Friend, man is to look at all times for all good things, in all trust and faith and love, with fear; he is not to offend Him, but trust Him as a child its father. For nature teaches us that there is one God, Who gives all good and helps against all evil, as even the heathen show us by their worshiping of idols. This commandment is,

Thou shalt have no other gods.

The Second Commandment

The Second Commandment teaches how man shall act toward God outwardly, in words, before other men, or even inwardly before his own self; that is, he shall honor God's Name. For no one can show God either to himself or to others in His divine nature, but only in His names. This commandment is,

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

The Third Commandment

The Third Commandment teaches how man shall act toward God outwardly in deeds, that is, in the worship of God. It is,

Thou shalt hallow the holy day.[1]

These three commandments, then, teach how man is to act toward God in thoughts, words and deeds,—that is, in all his life.

The Second Table

The Second Table of Moses—the Table of the Left Hand—contains the other seven Commandments. In these man is taught what he is in duty bound to do and not to do to other men, that is, to his neighbor.

The Fourth Commandment

The first of them teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward all the authorities who are God's representatives. Therefore, it has its place before the rest, and immediately after the first three, which concern God Himself. Such authorities are father and mother, spiritual and temporal lords, etc. It is,

Honor thy father and thy mother.

The Fifth Commandment

The second teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward one's neighbor in matters that concern his person,—not to do him injury, but to benefit and help him when he is in need. It is,

Thou shalt not kill.

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[1] For this translation see Vol. I, p. 222, note 1

The third teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward the best possession one's neighbor has next to his person,—that is, toward his wife, his child, his friend. He is to put no shame upon them, but to preserve their honor, so far as he is able. It is, **The Sixth Commandment**

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

The fourth teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward one's neighbor's temporal possessions,—not to take them from him or hinder him in their use, but to aid him in increasing them. It is, **The Seventh Commandment**

Thou shalt not steal.

The fifth teaches how one is to conduct oneself toward one's neighbor's worldly honor and good name,—not to impair them, but to increase and guard and protect them. It is, **The Eighth Commandment**

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

So, then, it is forbidden to harm one's neighbor in any of his possessions, and it is commanded to advance his interests. If we consider the natural law,[1] we find how just and right all these commandments are; for there is no act here commanded, toward God or one's neighbor, that each of us would not wish to have done toward himself, if he were God, or in God's place or his neighbor's.

The last two Commandments teach how wicked human nature is, and how pure we should be from all the desires of the flesh and desires for this world's goods; but that means struggle and labor as long as we live here below. They are, **The Ninth and Tenth Commandments**

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

[1] The law that we have outside of divine revelation. Cf. Rom. 2:14, 15.

A Brief Conclusion to the Ten Commandments

Matt. 7:12. Christ Himself says, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; this is the whole law and all the prophets." Now no one wishes to receive ingratitude for benefits conferred or to let another take away his good name. No one wishes to have pride shown toward him. No one wishes to endure disobedience, wrath, a wife's impurity, robbery, lying, deceit, slander; but every one wishes to find in his neighbor kindliness, thankfulness, helpfulness, truth and fidelity. All this the Ten Commandments require.

The Transgression of the Commandments

The First Commandment

Against the First

He who in his tribulation seeks the help of sorcery, black art, or witchcraft.

He who uses letters,[1] signs, herbs, words,[2] charms and the like.

He who uses divining-rods and incantations, and practices crystal-gazing, cloak-riding, and milk-stealing.[3]

He who orders his life and work by lucky days, the signs of the zodiac and the advice of the fortune-tellers.

He who seeks by charms and incantations to protect himself, his cattle, his house, his children and all his property against wolves, iron, fire and water.

He who blames his misfortunes and tribulations on the devil or on wicked men, and does not accept them with praise and love, as good and evil which come from God alone, and who does not ascribe them to God with thanksgiving and willing patience.

[1] The possessor of these letters (Himmels-und Teufelsbriefe) was thought to be under the special protection of the spirits.

[2] Magical formulas.

[3] Practices popularly ascribed to the witches.

He who tempts God, and needlessly puts himself in danger of body or soul.

He who glories in his piety, his wisdom, or other spiritual gifts.

He who honors God and the saints only for the sake of temporal gain, and is forgetful of his soul's need.

He who does not trust in God at all times, and is not confident of God's mercy in all he does.

He who doubts concerning the faith or the grace of God.

He who does not keep back others from unbelief and doubt, and does not help them, so far as in him lies, to believe and trust in God's grace.

Here, too, belong all forms of unbelief, despair, and misbelief.

Against the Second

The Second Commandment

He who swears needlessly or habitually.

He who perjures himself, or breaks a vow.

He who vows or swears to do evil.

He who curses by God's name.

He who tells foolish tales of God, and frivolously perverts the words of Scripture.

He who in his tribulation calls not upon God's name, nor blesses Him in joy and sorrow, in good fortune and in ill.

He who by his piety, wisdom or the like seeks reputation and honor and a name.

He who calls upon God's name falsely, as do the heretics and all vainglorious saints.

He who does not praise God's name in all that befalls him.

He who does not resist those that dishonor the name of God, use it falsely and work evil by it.

Here belong all the sins of vainglory and spiritual pride.

Against the Third

The Third Commandment

He who is given to gluttony, drunkenness, gambling, dancing, idleness and unchastity.

He who is lazy, who sleeps when he ought to be at mass, stays away from mass, goes walking and indulges in idle talk.

He who without special need works and transacts business on the Lord's day.

He who prays not, meditates not upon Christ's sufferings, repents not of his sins and asks no grace, and therefore keeps the day only in outward fashion, by his dress, his food and his actions.

He who in all his works and sufferings is not satisfied that God shall do with him as He will.

He who does not help others to do this and does not resist them when they do otherwise.

Here belongs the sin of slothfulness and indifference to worship.

Against the Fourth

The Fourth Commandment

He who is ashamed of his parents because of their poverty, their failings or their lowly position.

He who does not provide them with food and clothing in their need.

Much more, he who curses them, speaks evil of them, hates them and disobeys them.

He who does not from the heart esteem them highly because of God's commandment.

He who does not honor them, even though they do wrong and violence.

He who does not keep the commandments of the Christian Church with respect to fast- and feast-days, etc.

He who dishonors, slanders and insults the priestly office.

He who dost not pay honor, allegiance and obedience to his lords and those in authority, be they good or bad.

Among the transgressors of this commandment are all heretics, schismatics, apostates, excommunicates, hardened sinners and the like.

He who does not help men to keep this commandment and resist those who break it.

Here belong all forms of pride and disobedience.

Against the Fifth

The Fifth Commandment

Matt. 5:22.

He who is angry with his neighbor.

He who sayeth to his neighbor, R a c a , which stands for all terms of anger and hatred.

He who sayeth to his neighbor, F a t u e , "thou fool," which stands for every sort of vile language, cursing, slander, evil speaking, judging, condemning, mockery, etc.

He who scolds about his neighbor's sins or failings, and does not rather cover and excuse them.

He who forgives not his enemies nor prays for them, is not kindly disposed toward them and does them no good.

This commandment includes also all the sins of anger and hatred, such as murder, war, robbery, arson, quarreling, contention, envy of a neighbor's good fortune and joy over his misfortune.

He who does not practice works of mercy even toward his enemies.

He who sets men at enmity with one another.

He who sows discord between man and man.

He who does not reconcile those who are at enmity.

He who does not hinder or prevent wrath and enmity when he is able.

Against the Sixth

The Sixth Commandment

He who seduces virgins, commits adultery and is guilty of incest and like unchastity.

He who uses unnatural means to satisfy his desires—these are the "mute sins."[1]

He who arouses or displays evil desires with obscene words, songs, tales or pictures.

He who by looks, touch or thoughts arouses his own desires and defiles himself.

He who does not avoid the causes of unchastity, such as gluttony, drunkenness, idleness, laziness, oversleeping and intimate association with men or women.

He who by extravagant dress or demeanor incites others to unchastity.

He who gives house, place, time or help to the commission of this sin.

He who does not by word and deed help others to preserve their chastity.

Against the Seventh

The Seventh Commandment

He who practices thievery, robbery and usury.

He who uses false weights and measures, or sells bad wares for good.

He who receives bequests and incomes dishonestly.

He who withholds wages that have been earned, and repudiates a debt.

He who will not lend to a needy neighbor without taking interest.[2]

All who are avaricious and make haste to be rich, and do any of those other things by which a neighbor's property is withheld or taken away.

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[1] See below, p. 364, note 1.

[2] Luther believed, with the mediæval Church, that the lending of money at interest was a sin. See above pp. 159 f., and Weimar Ed., XXV, 293 ff.

He who does not protect another against loss.

He who does not warn another against loss.

He who places an obstacle in the way of his neighbor's profit and begrudges his neighbor's gains.

Against the Eighth

The Eighth Commandment

He who conceals or suppresses the truth in a court of law.

He who lies and deceives to another's hurt.

All hurtful flatterers, whisperers and double-dealers.

He who speaks evil of his neighbor's possessions, life, words and works and defames them.

He who gives place to slanderers, helps them on and does not resist them.

He who does not use his tongue to defend his neighbor's good name.

He who does not rebuke the slanderer.

He who does not say all good of every man and keep silent about all evil.

He who conceals or does not defend the truth.

Against the Last Two

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

The last two commandments have no place in confession,[1] but are set as a goal to which we are to attain, and toward which, through repentance and by the help and grace of God, we are daily to strive; for wicked inclinations do not wholly die, until the flesh turns to dust and is new created.[2]

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[1] i. e., In the confession made to the priest. See Vol. I, p. 285, and Introduction, above, p. 351.

[2] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 58, 285.

The "five senses"[1] are included in the Fifth and Sixth Commandments; the "six works of mercy," in the Fifth and Seventh; of the "seven deadly sins," pride is included in the First and Second, unchastity in the Sixth, anger and hatred in the Fifth, gluttony in the Sixth, indolence in the Third, and indeed in all the commandments. The "alien sins" are included in all the commandments, for it is possible to sin against all the commandments by bidding, advising and helping others to sin against them. The "crying sins" and the "mute sins" are committed against the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Commandments, etc.

In all these works we see nothing else than self-love, which seeks its own, takes from God what is His, from men what is theirs, and out of all it is and all it has and all it can do gives nothing either to God or men. St. Augustine well says, "The beginning of all sin is the love of one's own self."[2]

From all this it follows that the commandments command nothing but love and forbid nothing but love; nothing but love fulfils the commandments and nothing but love breaks them. Wherefore, St. Paul says that love is the fulfilling of all commandments; just as evil love is the transgression of all commandments.

Rom. 13:10.

The Fulfilment of the Commandments

Of the First

The First Commandment

To fear and love God in true faith, and always, in all our works, to trust Him firmly, and be wholly, completely, altogether resigned in all things, whether they be evil or good.

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[1] In the manuals for confession with which Luther was familiar sins were divided into the various classes mentioned here. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 90 ff.; Geffcken, Der Bilderkatechismus des XV Jhs., and especially v. Zezschwitz, II, 197 ff.

[2] Serm., 96, 2; Migne, XXVIII, 585.

Here belongs whatever is written in all the Scriptures concerning faith, hope and love of God, all of which is briefly comprehended in this commandment.

Of the Second

The Second Commandment

To praise, honor, bless and call upon God's Name, and to count our own name and honor as altogether nothing, so that God alone may be praised; for He alone is all things, and worketh all things.

Here belongs all that is taught in the Scripture about rendering praise and honor and thanks to God, about God's name and about joy in Him.

Of the Third

The Third Commandment

To prepare oneself for God and to seek His grace by praying, hearing mass and the Gospel, and meditating on the sufferings of Christ, so that one goes to the sacrament in a spiritual manner; for this commandment requires a soul "poor in spirit," which offers its nothingness to God, that He may be its God and receive in it the honor due His work and Name according to the first two commandments. Matt. 5:3.

Here belongs all that is commanded about worship, the hearing of sermons, and good works by which the body is made subject to the spirit, so that all our works may be God's and not our own.

Of the Fourth

The Fourth Commandment

Willing obedience, humility, submission to all authority because it is God's good-pleasure, as the Apostle St. Peter says, without retort, complaint or murmuring. 1 Pet. 2:18

Here belongs all that is written of obedience, humility, submissiveness and reverence.

Of the Fifth

The Fifth Commandment

Patience, meekness, kindness, peacefulness, mercy, and a heart in all things sweet and kindly, without hatred, anger or bitterness toward any man, even toward enemies.

Here belong all the teachings about patience, meekness, peace and concord.

Of the Sixth

The Sixth Commandment

Chastity, purity and modesty, in works, words, demeanor and thoughts; moderation in eating, drinking and sleeping; and everything that furthers chastity.

Here belong all the teachings about chastity, fasting, sobriety, moderation, prayer, watching, laboring and everything by which chastity is preserved.

Of the Seventh

The Seventh Commandment

Poverty of spirit, charity, willingness to lend and give of one's possessions, and a life free from greed and avarice.

Here belong all the teachings about avarice, unrighteous wealth, usury, guile, deceit, injury and hindrance of one's neighbor in temporal things.

Of the Eighth

The Eighth Commandment

A peaceful, wholesome tongue, that injures no one and profits every one, that reconciles those that are at enmity, apologizes for those that are slandered and takes their part; in short, truthfulness and simplicity in speech.

Here belong all the teachings about talking and keeping silent in matters which concern one's neighbor's honor and rights, his cause and his salvation.

Of the Last Two

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

That entire chastity and utter despising of temporal desire and possessions, which are perfectly attained only in the life to come.

In all these works we see nothing else than the love of others—that is, of God and of one's neighbor—which seeketh not its own, but what is God's and its neighbor's, and surrendereth itself freely to every one to be his, to serve him and to do his will. 1 Cor. 13:5

Thus you see that the Ten Commandments contain, in a very brief and orderly manner, all the teaching that is needful for man's life; and if a man desires to keep them, he has good works for every hour of his life, and has no need to choose him other works, to run hither and thither, and do what is not commanded.[1]

All this is evident from the fact that these commandments teach nothing about what a man shall do or not do for himself, or what he shall ask of others, but only what he shall do and not do for others—God and man. From this we are to learn that their fulfilment consists in love toward others, not toward ourselves; for in his own behalf man already seeks and does and leaves undone too much. He needs not to be taught this, but to be kept from it. Therefore he lives best who lives in no wise for himself, and he who lives for himself, lives worst; for so the Ten Commandments teach. From them we learn how few men lead good lives; nay, as man, no one can lead a good life. Knowing this, we must learn next whence we shall get the power to lead good lives and to keep the Commandments.[2]

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[1] Cf. Vol. I, p. 187.
[2] See above, p. 355.

THE CREED

Division of the Creed

The Creed is divided into three parts,[1] according to the three Persons of the holy and divine Trinity who are therein mentioned. The first part belongs to the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the Holy Ghost; for the Trinity is the chief thing in the Creed, on which everything else depends.

Two Ways of Believing

We should note that there are two ways of believing. One way is to believe a b o u t God, as I do when I believe that what is said of God is true; just as I do when I believe what is said about the Turk, the devil or hell. This faith is knowledge or observation rather than faith. The other way is to believe i n God, as I do when I not only believe that what is said about Him is true, but put my trust in Him, surrender myself to Him and make bold to deal with Him, believing without doubt that He will be to me and do to me just what is said of Him. I could not thus believe in the Turk or in any man, however highly his praises might be sung. For I can readily believe that a man is good, but I do not venture on that account to build my faith on him.

True Faith

This faith, which in life or death dares to believe that God is what He is said to be, is the only faith that makes a man a Christian and obtains from God whatever it will. This faith no false and evil heart can have, for it is a living faith; and this faith is commanded in the First Commandment, which says, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods." Wherefore the word i n is rightly used; and it is diligently to be noted that we may not say, "I believe God the Father," or "about the Father," but "i n God the Father, i n Jesus Christ, i n the Holy Ghost." This faith we should render to no one but to God. Therefore we confess the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost, when we believe in them even as

[1] Luther has here departed from the customary Roman division of the Creed into twelve articles.

we believe in the Father; and just as our faith in all three Persons is one and the same faith, so the three Persons are one and the same God.

The First Part of the Creed

The First Article

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

This means—

I renounce the evil spirit, all idolatry, all sorcery and misbelief.

I put my trust in no man on earth, nor in myself, my power, my learning, my wealth, my piety, nor anything that I may have.

I put my trust in no creature in heaven or on earth.

I dare to put my trust only in the one absolute, invisible, incomprehensible God, Who made heaven and earth, and Who alone is over all creatures.

On the other hand, I am not afraid of any wickedness of the devil and his company, for my God is above them all.

Even though I be forsaken or persecuted by all men, I still believe in God.

I believe, even though I am poor, unwise, unlearned, despised or in need of everything.

I believe, even though I am a sinner. For this faith of mine must and shall soar above everything that is and everything that is not—above sin and virtue and all else—so that it may remain simply and purely a faith in God, as the First Commandment constrains me.

Nor do I ask of Him a sign, to tempt Him. Luke 11 : 16

I trust constantly in Him, however long He tarry, and do not prescribe the goal, the time, the measure or the manner

of His working, but in bold, true faith I leave all to His divine will.

If He is almighty, what can I lack that He cannot give me and do for me?

If He is Creator of heaven and earth and Lord of all things, who will take anything from me, or harm me?

Rom. 8:28 Nay, how shall not all things rather serve me and turn out to my good, if He to Whom all things are obedient and subject wishes me well?

Because He is God, He can do the thing that is best for me, and knows what that thing is.

Because He is Father, He wills to do what is best for me, and to do it with all His heart.

Matt. 8:13 Because I do not doubt, but put my trust in Him, I am assuredly His child, His servant and His heir forever, and as I believe, so will it be done unto me.

The Second Part

The Second Article

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

This means—

I believe not only that Jesus Christ is the true and only Son of God, begotten from eternity in one eternal, divine nature and substance; but also that all things are

made subject to Him by His Father, and that in His humanity He is made Lord of me and of all things which, in His divinity, He, with the Father, has created.

I believe that no one can believe in the Father or come to the Father by his own learning, works or reason, nor by anything that can be named in heaven or on earth, save only in and through Jesus Christ, His only Son—that is, through faith in His name and lordship. John 14:6

I firmly believe that for my sake He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, without human or fleshly work, without bodily father or seed of man, to the end that so He might purify my sinful, fleshly, unclean, damnable conception, and the conception of all who believe in Him, and make it spiritual through His own and His almighty Father's gracious will.

I believe that for me He was born of the pure Virgin Mary, without harm to her bodily and spiritual virginity, in order that, by the mercy of His Father, He might make my sinful, damnable birth, and the birth of all who believe in Him, blessed and harmless and pure.

I believe that He bore His cross and passion for my sin and the sin of all believers, and thereby has consecrated all sufferings and every cross, and made them not only harmless, but salutary and highly meritorious.

I believe that He died and was buried to slay entirely and to bury my sin and the sin of all who believe in Him, and that He has destroyed bodily death and made it altogether harmless, nay profitable and salutary.

I believe that He descended into hell to overthrow and take captive the devil and all his power, guile and wickedness, for me and for all who believe in Him, so that henceforth the devil cannot harm me; and that He has redeemed me from the pains of hell, and made them harmless and meritorious.

I believe that He rose on the third day from the dead, to give to me and to all who believe in Him a new life; and that He has thereby quickened us with Him, in grace and

in the Spirit, that we may sin no more, but serve Him alone in every grace and virtue.

I believe that He ascended into heaven and received from the Father power and honor above all angels and all creatures, and thus sitteth on the right hand of God—that is, He is King and Lord over all that is God's, in heaven and hell and earth. Therefore, He can help me and all believers in all our necessities against all our adversaries and enemies.

I believe that He will come again from heaven at the last day, to judge those who then are living and those who have died meanwhile, and all men, all angels and devils must come before His judgment-seat and see Him in the flesh; that He will come to redeem me and all who believe in Him from bodily death and all infirmities, to punish our enemies and adversaries eternally, and to redeem us eternally from their power.

The Third Article

The Third Part

I believe in the Holy Ghost, a Holy Christian Church, a communion of saints, a forgiveness of sins, a resurrection of the body, and a life everlasting. Amen.

This means—

I believe not only that the Holy Ghost is one true God, with the Father and the Son, but that no one can come to the Father through Christ and His life, sufferings and death, and all that has been said of Him, nor attain any of His blessings, without the work of the Holy Ghost, by which the Father and the Son teach, quicken, call, draw me and all that are His, make us, in and through Christ, alive and holy and spiritual, and thus bring us to the Father; for it

is He by Whom the Father, through Christ and in Christ, worketh all things and giveth life to all.

I believe that there is on earth, through the whole wide world, no more than one holy, common,[1] Christian Church, which is nothing else than the congregation,[2] or assembly of the saints, i. e., the pious, believing men on earth, which is gathered, preserved, and ruled by the Holy Ghost, and daily increased by means of the sacraments and the Word of God.

I believe that no one can be saved who is not found in this congregation, holding with it to one faith, word, sacraments, hope and love, and that no Jew, heretic, heathen or sinner can be saved along with it, unless he become reconciled to it, united with it and conformed to it in all things.

I believe that in this congregation, or Church,[3] all things are common, that everyone's possessions belong to the others and no one has anything of his own; therefore, all the prayers and good works of the whole congregation must help, assist and strengthen me and every believer at all times, in life and death, and thus each bear the other's burden, as St. Paul teaches. Gal. 6:2

I believe that in this congregation, and nowhere else, there is forgiveness of sins; that outside of it, good works, however great they be or many, are of no avail for the forgiveness of sins; but that within it, no matter how much, how greatly or how often men may sin, nothing can hinder forgiveness of sins, which abides wherever and as long as this one congregation abides. To this congregation Christ gives the keys, and says, in Matthew xviii, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." Matt. 18:18 In like manner He says, in Matthew xvi, to the one man Peter, who stands as the representative of the one and only Church,[4] Matt. 16:19

[1] Gemein.
[2] Gemeine.
[3] Christenheit, cf. Vol. I, p. 338.
[4] Kirche.

"Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

I believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead, in which, by the same Holy Ghost, all flesh will be raised again—that is, all men, in flesh, or body, the good and the wicked; and, therefore, the self-same flesh which has died, been buried, mouldered and been destroyed in many ways shall return and become alive.

I believe that after the resurrection there will be an eternal life for the saints and an eternal death for sinners; and I doubt not that the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, with and in the Holy Ghost, will bring all this to pass—that is the meaning of A m e n , "It is assuredly and certainly true."

Hereupon follows

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Preface

The Preface and Preparation for offering the Seven Petitions to God: O u r F a t h e r W h o a r t i n h e a v e n .

T h i s m e a n s —

O Almighty God, Who in Thy boundless mercy hast not only granted us permission, but by Thine only beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, hast bidden and taught us through His merit and mediation to look to Thee as Father and call Thee Father, though Thou mightest in all justice be a stern Judge of us sinners, who have sinned so often and so grievously against Thy divine and gracious will, and thus have angered Thee: Put in our hearts, by this Thy mercy, a comfortable confidence in Thy fatherly love, and make us feel and taste the sweet-

ness of childlike trust, so that we may joyfully name Thee Father, and know Thee and love Thee, and call upon Thee in all our necessities. Have us in Thy keeping, that we may remain Thy children, and not be guilty of making Thee, dear Father, a terrible Judge, and ourselves Thine enemies, and not Thy children.

It is Thy will that we not only call Thee Father, but that all of us together call Thee o u r Father, and thus offer our prayers with one accord for all: Grant us, therefore, brotherly love and unity, that we may know and think of one another as true brethren and sisters, and pray to Thee, our one common Father, for all men and for every man, even as one child prays for another to its father.

Let no one among us seek his own things or forget before Thee the things of others; but, all hatred, envy and dissension laid aside, may we love one another as good and true children of God, and thus say with one accord not "my Father," but "o u r Father." Phil. 2:4

Moreover, since Thou art not a father according to the flesh nor upon earth, but art in heaven, a spiritual Father, Who diest not and art not weak, but unlike an earthly father who cannot help himself, whereby Thou showest us how immeasurably better a Father Thou art, and teachest us to hold as nothing in comparison with Thee all earthly fatherhood, fatherland, friends, goods, flesh and blood: Grant us, therefore, O Father, that we may also be Thy heavenly children; teach us to think only of our souls and of our heavenly inheritance, that our temporal fatherland and earthly lot may not deceive and hold and hinder us, and make us altogether children of this world, so that with real and true cause we may say, "O our h e a v e n l y Father," and may be truly Thy heavenly children.

The First Petition: H a l l o w e d b e t h y N a m e . The First Petition

T h i s m e a n s —

O Almighty God, dear heavenly Father, in this wretched vale of sorrows Thy Holy Name is so much profaned, blasphemed and put to shame, given to much which is not for Thine honor, abused in many things and made a cloak for sin, so that even a shameful life may well be called a shaming and dishonoring of Thy Holy Name:

Grant us, therefore, Thy divine grace, that we may be on our guard against everything which doth not serve to the praise and honor of Thy Holy Name. Help us, that all witchcraft and sorcery may be done away. Help us, that all conjuring of the devil or of creatures by Thy Name may cease. Help us, that all false beliefs and superstitions may be rooted out. Help us, that all heresy and false doctrine which disguise themselves with Thy Name may come to naught. Help us, that no false pretence of truth and piety and holiness may deceive any man. Help us that none may swear or lie or deceive by Thy Name.

Protect us against all false confidence pretending to rest upon Thy Name. Protect us against all spiritual pride and the vainglory of worldly honor or reputation. Help us in all our necessities and weaknesses to call upon Thy Holy Name. Help us in anguish of conscience and in the hour of death not to forget Thy Name. Help us with all our goods and in all our words and works to praise and honor Thee alone, and not thereby to make or seek to make a name for ourselves, but only for Thee, Whose alone are all things. Preserve us from the shameful vice of ingratitude.

Matt. 5:16 Grant that by our good works and life all other men may be stirred up to praise, not us, but Thee in us, and to honor Thy Name. Help us, that our evil works or weaknesses may give no one occasion to stumble and dishonor Thy Name or to cease from praising Thee. Keep us, that we may not desire any temporal or eternal blessing which is not to the honor and praise of Thy Name, and if we pray for such things, give Thou no ear to our folly. Help us so to live that we may be found true children of God, that Thy Father-name may not be named upon us falsely or in vain.

To this petition belong all the psalms and prayers in which we praise, honor, thank and sing to God, and here belongs the whole Hallelujah.

The Second Petition

The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom come.

This means—

This wretched life is a kingdom of all sin and wickedness, under one lord, the evil spirit, the source and head of all wickedness and sin; but Thy kingdom is a kingdom of every grace and virtue under one Lord, Jesus Christ Thy dear Son, the Head and Source of every grace and virtue. Therefore help us, dear Father, and be gracious unto us. Grant us above all things a true and constant faith in Christ, a fearless hope in Thy mercy despite all the fearfulness of our sinful conscience, and a thorough love to Thee and to all mankind. Keep us from unbelief and despair and revengefulness.

Help us against lewdness and unchastity, and give us a love for virginity and all purity. Help us out of dissension, war and discord, and let the virtue of Thy kingdom come—peace, and unity, and quiet rest. Grant that neither wrath nor any other bitterness may set up its kingdom within us, but that there may rule within us, by Thy grace, sweet simplicity and brotherly fidelity, and all kindliness, charity and gentleness. Help us to have within us no undue sorrow or sadness, but let joy and gladness in Thy grace and mercy come to us. And help us, finally, that all sin may be turned away from us, so that we may be filled with Thy grace, and all virtues and good works, and thus become Thy kingdom, so that all our heart, mind and spirit, with all our powers of body and soul, may obediently serve Thee, keep Thy commandments and do Thy will, be ruled by Thee alone, and may not follow after self or flesh or world or devil.

Grant that this Thy kingdom, now begun in us, may

increase, and daily grow in power; that indifference to God's service—that subtle wickedness—may not overcome us and make us fall away, but give us rather the power and earnest purpose not only to make a beginning in righteousness, but boldly to go on unto perfection; as
Ps. 13:3 f. saith the prophet, "Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death or grow idle in the good life I have begun; and lest the enemy again prevail against us."

Help us that we may remain constant, and that Thy future kingdom may finish and complete this Thy kingdom which is here begun. Help us out of this sinful, perilous life; help us to long for the life to come, and more and more to hate this life. Help us not to fear death, but desire it. Take away from us the love of living here, and all dependence on this present life, that thus Thy kingdom may in us be made perfect and complete.

To this petition belong all the psalms, versicles and prayers in which we pray to God for grace and virtue.

The Third Petition

The Third Petition: Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This means—

Our will, compared with Thy will, is never good, but always evil; but Thy will is always best, lovable above all things and most to be desired. Therefore, be merciful to us, dear Father, and let nothing be done according to our will. Grant us and teach us to have real and perfect patience when our will is broken or hindered. Help us, if anyone speaks or is silent, does or omits anything that is contrary to our will, that we become not angry or wrathful, neither curse, nor complain, nor cry out, nor judge, nor condemn, nor accuse. Help us with all humility to give place to those who oppose or hinder our will, and letting our own will go, to praise and bless

them and do good to them as those who, against our own will, fulfil Thy divine will, which is altogether good.

Give us grace willingly to bear illness, poverty, shame, suffering and adversity, and to know that these are Thy divine will, for the crucifying of our will. Help us to bear even injustice gladly, and keep us from avenging ourselves. Suffer us not to render evil for evil or to resist force with force, but grant us grace to take pleasure in this will of Thine, which lays these things upon us, and to give Thee praise and thanks. Suffer us not to lay it to the charge of the devil or of wicked men when anything befalls us contrary to our will, but help us to ascribe it only to Thy divine will, which orders all such things for the hindering of our will and the increasing of our blessedness in Thy kingdom.

Help us to die willingly and joyfully, and to welcome death as a manifestation of Thy will, so that impatience and despair may not make us disobedient toward Thee. Help us that all our members—eyes, tongue, heart, hands, feet—be not submissive to their own desires or will, but be taken captive, imprisoned and broken in Thy will. Preserve us from all evil, rebellious, obstinate, stubborn and capricious self-will.

Grant us a true obedience, a submissiveness simple and complete in all things, spiritual and worldly, temporal and eternal. Preserve us from the cruel vice of aspersion, slander, back-biting, malicious judging, condemning and accusing of other men. O keep far from us the great unhappiness and grievous plague of tongues like these; but teach us, when we see or hear in others things blameworthy and to us displeasing, to hold our peace, to cover them over, to make complaint of them to none but Thee, to give them over to Thy will, and thus heartily to forgive our debtors and have sympathy with them.

Teach us to know that no one can do us any harm, except he first do himself a thousandfold greater harm in Thine eyes, so that we may be moved thereby to mercy rather than to anger, to pity rather than revenge. Help

us not to rejoice when it goes ill with those who have not done our will or have hurt us or otherwise displeased us by their way of life; help us also not to be disturbed when it goes well with them.

To this petition belong all the psalms, versicles and prayers in which we pray to be delivered from sin and from our enemies.

The Fourth Petition

The Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily Bread.

This means—

The bread is our Lord Jesus Christ,[1] Who feedeth and comforteth the soul. Therefore, O heavenly Father, grant us grace, that Christ's life and words, His works and sufferings be preached, made known and preserved to us and to all the world. Help us that in all our life we may have His words and works before us as a powerful example and mirror of all virtue. Help us in sufferings and adversities to find strength and comfort in and through His cross and passion. Help us in firm faith to overcome our own death by His death, and thus boldly to follow our beloved Leader into the other life.

Give Thy grace to all preachers, that they may preach Thy Word and Christ, to profit and salvation, in all the world. Help all who hear the preaching of Thy Word to learn Christ, and honestly to better their lives thereby. Graciously drive out of the Holy Church all strange preaching and teaching from which men do not learn Christ. Have mercy upon all bishops, priests, clergy and all that are in authority, that they may be enlightened by Thy grace to teach and govern us aright by precept and example. Preserve all that are weak in faith, that they may not stumble at the wicked example of their rulers.

[1] In the catechisms of 1529 Luther abandons this interpretation of the bread.

Preserve us from heretical and apostate teachers, that we may remain one, partaking of one daily bread—the daily doctrine and word of Christ. Graciously teach us to regard aright the sufferings of Christ, receive them into our hearts, and form them in our lives, to our salvation.

Suffer us not at our last hour to be deprived of the true and holy body of Christ.[1] Help all priests to use and administer the holy sacrament worthily and savingly, to the edification of the whole Church. Help us and all Christians to receive the Holy Sacrament at its proper season, with Thy grace and to our salvation. And summa summarum, "Give us our daily bread," that is, may Christ abide in us and we in Him forever, and may we worthily bear His name, the name of Christian.

To this petition belong all prayers or psalms which are prayed for rulers, and especially those for protection against false teachers, those for the Jews, heretics and all that are in error, and also those for all distressed and comfortless sufferers.

The Fifth Petition: And forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors. **The Fifth Petition**

This means—

To this petition a condition is attached, viz., that we first forgive our debtors. When that has been done we may say afterward, "Forgive us our debts." That we may do this, we have prayed in the Third Petition, "Thy will be done." It is God's will that we patiently suffer all things, and not render evil for evil, nor seek revenge; but render good for evil, as doth our Father in heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and evil, and sendeth rain upon the thankful and unthankful. Therefore, we pray: Matt. 5:45

O Father, comfort our conscience now and in our last hour, for it is now and will be hereafter in grievous terror

[1] i. e. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

because of our sin and Thy judgment. Send Thy peace into our hearts, that we may with joy await Thy judg-
Ps. 143:2 ment. Enter not with us into the sharpness of Thy judgment, for then will no man be found righteous. Teach us, dear Father, not to rely on our own good works or merits, or to comfort ourselves therewith; but boldly to cast ourselves upon Thy boundless mercy alone. In like manner, suffer us not to despair because of our blameworthy, sinful life, but to deem Thy mercy higher and broader and stronger than all our life.

Help all men who in the hour of death or of temptation feel the anguish of despair, and especially N. or N. Have mercy also upon all poor souls in purgatory, especially N. and N. Forgive them and all of us our sins, comfort them and receive them into grace. Render us Thy good for our evil, as Thou hast commanded us to do to others. Silence the evil spirit, that cruel slanderer, accuser and magnifier of our sins now and at our last hour, and in all anguish of conscience, even as we too refrain from slander, and from magnifying the sins of other men. Judge us not according to the accusation of the devil and of our miserable conscience, and hearken not to the voice of our enemies who accuse us day and night before Thee, even as we too will not give ear to those who accuse and slander other men. Remove from us the heavy burden of sin and conscience, that with light and joyous hearts we may live and die, do and suffer, trusting wholly in Thy mercy.

To this petition belong all the psalms and prayers which invoke God's mercy upon sin.

The Sixth Petition

The Sixth Petition: And lead us not into Temptation.

This means—

We have three temptations or adversaries, the flesh, the world and the devil. Therefore, we pray:

Dear Father, grant us grace that we may have control over the lust of the flesh. Help us to resist its desire to eat, to drink, to sleep overmuch, to be idle, to be slothful. Help us by fasting, by moderation in food and dress and sleep and work, by watching and labor, to bring the flesh into subjection and fit it for good works. Help us to fasten its evil, unchaste inclinations and all its desires and incitements with Christ upon the cross, and to slay them, so that we may not consent to any of its allurements, nor follow after them. Help us when we see a beautiful person, or image or any other creature, that it may not be a temptation, but an occasion for love of chastity and for praising Thee in Thy creatures. When we hear sweet sounds and feel things that please the senses, help us to seek therein not lust, but Thy praise and honor. **The Flesh**

Preserve us from the great vice of avarice and the desire for the riches of this world. Keep us, that we may not seek this world's honor and power, nor consent to the desire for them. Preserve us, that the world's deceit, pretences and false promises may not move us to walk in its ways. Preserve us, that the wickedness and the adversities of the world may not lead us to impatience, revenge, wrath or other vices. Help us to renounce the world's lies and deceits, its promises and unfaithfulness and all its good and evil (as we have already promised in baptism to do), to abide firmly in this renunciation and to grow therein from day to day. **The World**

Preserve us from the suggestions of the devil, that we may not consent to pride, become self-satisfied, and despise others for the sake of riches, rank, power, knowledge, beauty or other good gifts of Thine. Preserve us, that we fall not into hatred or envy for any cause. Preserve us, that we yield not to despair, that great temptation of our faith, neither now nor at our last hour. **The Devil**

Have in Thy keeping, heavenly Father, all who strive and labor against these great and manifold temptations. Strengthen those who are yet standing; raise up all those

who have fallen and are overcome; and to all of us grant Thy grace, that in this miserable and uncertain life, incessantly surrounded by so many enemies, we may fight with constancy, and with a firm and knightly faith, and win the everlasting crown.

The Seventh Petition

The Seventh Petition: Deliver us from evil.

This means—

This petition is a prayer against all that is evil in pain and punishment; as the holy Church prays in the litanies: Deliver us, O Father, from Thine eternal wrath and from the pains of hell. Deliver us from Thy strict judgment, in death and at the last day. Deliver us from sudden death. Preserve us from water and fire, from lightning and hail. Preserve us from famine and scarcity. Preserve us from war and bloodshed. Preserve us from Thy great plagues, pestilence, the French sickness, and other grievous diseases. Preserve us from all evils and necessities of body, yet in such wise that in all these things Thy Name may be honored, Thy Kingdom increased and Thy divine Will be done. Amen.

AMEN

The Amen

God help us, without doubting, to obtain all these petitions, and suffer us not to doubt that Thou hast heard us and wilt hear us in them all; that it is "Yea," not "Nay," and not "Perhaps." Therefore we say with joy, "Amen—it is true and certain." Amen.

THE EIGHT WITTENBERG SERMONS

1522

INTRODUCTION

After the bold utterance of unshaken conviction at the Diet of Worms Luther disappeared from the scene of his activities. In the darkness of night he was taken by the friendly "foe" to the secure hiding-place where the imperial proscription could not affect him. Thus he entered the Wartburg on May 4, 1521. But the "crowded canvas of the sixteenth century," bereft of its central figure, threatened to become mere portrayal of turbulence and confusion. In Wittenberg and other places the new life of the soul had burst its ancient fetters and was about to lose its spiritual value in a destructive lateral movement. The inability of the hesitating elector and the helpless Melanchthon to stem the tide, caused Luther, in utter disregard of personal safety, to return to his beloved city on March 6, 1522, and on Sunday, March 9th, and the seven days following to preach the Eight Sermons herewith given, guiding the turbulent waves of popular uprising into the channels marked by faith and love.

During his absence others had heeded the clarion call to lead the Church out of its "Babylonian Captivity," and had put into practice the measures which would carry out the principles he had uttered. The mass was abolished,[1] monks left the monasteries, some priests took wives, and communion under both kinds was instituted. With these measures Luther was in sympathy, which is evident from his letters to Melanchthon[2] and to Wenceslaus Link, Staupitz's successor as the Augustinian vicar,[3] and the treatises De votis monasticis and De abroganda missa privata.[4] But these treatises also show that Luther was not fully informed of the disturbances accompanying the new measures. In so critical a time the absence of a great leader was soon manifest. Melanchthon, ardent in the beginning, could not hold back the radical procedure of Carlstadt and Zwilling.

Carlstadt, moderate at first in his conduct, nevertheless had sown the seeds, in his teaching, which resulted in the bountiful harvest of disorder.

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[1] The consequent closing of the churches except for preaching services leads Müller (Luther und Karlstadt, p. 52) to see in this the origin of the Protestant custom of closing churches on weekdays.

[2] August 1, 1521. Enders, Luthers Briefwechsel, III, 208.

[3] December 20, 1521. Enders, III, 257.

[4] Date of both, November, 1521. Both in Weimar Ed., VIII, and in Erl. Ed., Op. var. arg., VI. The latter also in German (Vom Misbrauch der Messe), Erl. Ed., XXVIII.

Without Luther's clearness of vision and aptness of speech, he likewise failed to discern the pitfalls which Luther so carefully avoided. "In my opinion, he who partakes only of the bread, sins."[1] "In all things of divine appointment, the divine law must be taught and observed, even if it cause offence."[2] "The Gregorian chant keeps the spirit away from God. . . . Organs belong to theatrical exhibitions and princes' palaces."[3] "That we have images in churches is wrong and contrary to the first commandment. To have carved and painted idols standing on the altar is even more harmful and devilish."[4] For his Scripture proof in other places, too, particularly concerning vows, Carlstadt drew largely from the Old Testament. On Christmas Day, 1521, he preached a sermon in which he opposed going to confession before receiving communion. Attired in his street garb he then proceeded to celebrate an "evangelical" mass by giving communion in both kinds to the people, placing the elements directly into their hands. Many of the communicants had not previously confessed, nor observed the prescribed rule of fasting. From a denial of any distinction between clergy and laity, Carlstadt finally progressed to a condemnation of all scholarship and learning as unnecessary to an understanding of the Divine Word, since it is given directly from above.[5]

Without the theological acumen of Carlstadt, and with less restraint, the Augustinian monk Gabriel Zwilling labored in season and out of season for the new order of things. In December the Zwickau prophets, Niclas Storch, Thomas Drechsel, weavers by trade, and Marcus Stübner, a former university student, appeared in Wittenberg claiming direct divine inspiration, and preached the overturn of present conditions. Earlier in the month (December 3d) some students and citizens had caused a disturbance in the parish church and driven off the priests who were saying mass. Soon after a number of citizens crowded into the council chamber and demanded of the three councillors who presided over Wittenberg the abolition of the mass by law, the restitution of the cup, and the release of those in custody for causing the tumult of December 3d. On Christmas Eve both the parish and the castle churches witnessed scenes of wild disorder. On January 11th the monks, led by Zwilling, destroyed all the altars except one in the convent church, and cast out the images. The city council, in the endeavor to restore order, on January 24, 1522, in full accord with a commission of the university, adopted a "Worthy Ordinance for the princely City of Wittenberg,"[6] in which the popular demands were met and a date was fixed on which

[1] 24 Theses (July, 1521). BARGE, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, I, 291. Repeated in De celebratione missae (October), ibid., 487.

[2] De scandalo et missa (Oct. or Nov.), ibid., 491.

[3] De cantu gregoriano disputatio (1520), ibid., 492.

[4] Von Abthuung der Bilder (January, 1522), ibid., 387.

[5] See KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, Martin Luther, I, 485.

[6] Published by H. LIETZMANN in Kleine Texte, no. 21; also in RICHTER, Kirchenordnungen, II, 484.

the images should be removed from the parish church—the only one of the four churches of Wittenberg subject to the council's control. But the excited populace did not await the day. Taking the matter into its own hands it invaded the church, tore images and pictures from the walls and burned them up.

The council and the university turned to Luther. Immediately after his three-day secret visit to Wittenberg in December, on which he had sensed the unrest in Wittenberg and elsewhere, he issued his Faithful Exhortation for all Christians to shun Riot and Rebellion,[1] in which he emphasizes the principles reiterated in the Eight Sermons, the sufficiency of the Word and the duty of dealing gently with the weak. But the time for writing had passed. "Satan had broken into his sheepfold" and had caused such havoc that he could not meet it "by writing."[2] In spite of the elector's instruction to remain—the same whose ineffectual measures had failed to avert the storm—Luther on March 1st bade farewell to the Wartburg. On his way to Wittenberg, in Borna on March 5th, he wrote the famous letter to the elector[3] in which he declared that he desired no protection from the elector. "I come to Wittenberg under much higher protection." He arrived in Wittenberg on Thursday, March 6th, and on the following Sunday, March 9th, the first Sunday in Lent, he again ascended the pulpit in the parish church. In an interesting report of an eye and ear witness—Johann Kessler—we are told that he first gave an explanation of the Gospel for the day on the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4: 1 ff.), after which "he dropped the text and took up the present affair."[4] This earlier portion of the sermon has not come down to us. It may be that Luther likewise first preached on the Gospel for the day on the following Sunday, and for that reason it is called "a brief summary" (see Sermon No. 8) in the early printed editions, when, in reality, it is longer than that of Saturday (No. 7).

The sermons, delivered in a vox suavis et sonora,[5] produced immediate results. In a letter by Schurf, dated March 15th, even before the last of the sermons had been delivered, it is stated that "Gabriel [Zwilling] has confessed that he was wrong." Carlstadt was silenced, the city council made acknowledgment to Luther by substantial gifts and Wittenberg bowed to law and order.

Luther did not publish these sermons himself. He elaborated the principles here uttered in the treatise, published a few weeks later, The Re-

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[1] Weimar Ed., VIII, 670 ff. Erl. Ed., XXII, 43 ff.

[2] Luther's letter to the elector on March 7th. De Wette, II, 138; Weimar Ed., X^c, Introd., xlvii f.

[3] Enders, III, 484.

[4] Kessler, Sabbata, St. Gallen, 1902. Quoted at length in Weimar Ed., X^c, Introduction, lii.

[5] Letter of Albert Burer, Briefwechsel des Beatus Rhenanus, 303. See also Introd., liii, in Weimar Ed., X^c.

ception of both Kinds in the Sacrament.[1] A fragment, covering the thoughts of sermons 1 to 4, and formerly described as a pastoral letter to the Wittenberg congregation, is now held to be a piece of written preparation by Luther for these sermons.[2]

The notes of a hearer of these sermons furnished the basis for the printed editions. The Wednesday sermon (No. 4—On the Images) was published separately at Augsburg and other places; the eight sermons were published in Augsburg and Mainz. Seven editions of the former and six of the latter are known.

Johann Aurifaber, the publisher of Luther's Table-talk, also edited and published these sermons at Eisleben in 1564. His free amplification of the older text, in an attempt to modernize it, is not an improvement. His considerable additions to Luther's Scripture citations are from Luther's own translation of a later date. Yet for two centuries this edition remained the standard. The Walch Edition was the first again to pay attention to the original text, however placing the Aurifaber text first. (Walch Ed., XX.) The Erlangen Edition (XXVIII) observes the same order. O. von Gerlach, Luthers Werke, Auswahl seiner Hauptschriften (Berlin, 1841), gives only the older text (V); Buchwald, in the Berlin Edition (I), gives only the Aurifaber text. The Weimar Edition (X^c) places the old text on the upper half of the page, with the Aurifaber recension immediately below. The translation which follows is based on the older text as found in the Weimar Edition, with which the other editions have been compared.

For further discussion, see, in addition to the literature mentioned, the biographies of Luther and the Church Histories. Also

Barge's articles in the Realencyklopädie, X, 73 ff. and XXIII, 738 ff.; also Kolde's, IV, 639 ff. and XIII, 556 ff.

Barge, Frühprotestantisches Gemeindechristentum in Wittenberg und Orlamünde, Leipzig, 1909.

Cristiani, Du Luthéranisme au Protestantisme, Paris, 1911.

Boehmer, Luther im Lichte der neueren Forschung, third ed., Leipzig, 1914.

Vedder, The Reformation in Germany, New York, 1914.

A. STEIMLE.

Allentown, Pa.

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[1] Weimar Ed., Xb; Erl. Ed., XXVIII.

[2] See Kawerau, Luthers Rückkehr von der Wartburg, 67. Fragment in full in Weimar Ed., X^c, Introduction, lv ff., where see also a recently discovered short Latin fragment, which served a similar purpose.

EIGHT SERMONS BY DR. MARTIN LUTHER

Preached at Wittenberg in Lent, 1522

Treating Briefly of the Mass, Images, Both Kinds in the Sacrament, Eating of Meats, Private Confession, etc.

THE FIRST SERMON

INVOCAVIT SUNDAY

The challenge of death comes to us all, and no one can die for another. Every one must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone. We can shout into one another's ears, but every one must be prepared finally to meet death alone. I will not be with you then, nor you with me. Therefore every one must know for himself the chief things in Christianity, and be armed therewith. They are the same which you, my beloved, have long ago heard from me. **The Chief Things**

In the first place, We must know that we are the children of wrath, and all our works, intentions and thoughts are nothing at all. To prove this point we must have a clear, strong text, and although there are many such in the Bible I will not overwhelm you with them, but ask you to note just this one, "We are all the children of wrath." Eph. 2:3 And pray, do not boast in reply: I have builded an altar, given a foundation for masses, etc.

Secondly, That God has sent us His only-begotten Son that we may believe in Him, and whosoever will put his trust in Him, should be free from sin and a child of God, as **Faith**

John 1:12 John declares in the first chapter, "He gave them power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Here we should all be thoroughly at home in the Bible and be ready with many passages to confront the devil. In respect to these two points nothing seems to be lacking or amiss, but they have been rightly preached to you; I should be very sorry if it were otherwise. Nay, I am well aware and I dare say, that you are more learned herein than I, and that there are not only one, two, three, or four, but perhaps ten or more, who have this wisdom and enlightenment.

Love Thirdly, There must also be love, and through love we must do unto one another as God has done unto us through faith. For without love faith is nothing, as St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 13:1 I Cor. ii, "If I could speak with the tongues of angels, and of the highest things in faith, and have not love, I am nothing." And here, dear friends, have you not grievously failed? I see no signs of love among you, and I observe that you have not been grateful to God for His rich gifts and treasures.

Matt. 11:23 Let us beware lest Wittenberg become Capernaum. I notice that you have a great deal to say of the doctrine which is preached to you, of faith and of love. This is not surprising; an ass can almost intone the lessons, and why should you not be able to repeat the doctrines and formulas? Dear friends, the kingdom of God,—and we are that kingdom,—consists not in speech or in words, but in deeds, in works and exercises. God does not want hearers and repeaters of words, but doers and followers who exercise 1 Cor. 13:12 themselves in the faith that worketh by love. For a faith without love is not enough—rather it is not faith at all, but a counterfeit of faith, just as a face seen in a mirror is not a real face, but merely the reflection of a face.

Patience Fourthly, We likewise need patience. For whoever has faith, trusts in God and shows love to his neighbor, practicing it day by day, must needs suffer persecution. For the devil never sleeps, and continually molests. But patience Rom. 5:4 works and produces hope, which freely yields itself to God

and finds solace in Him. Thus faith, by much affliction and persecution, ever increases, and is strengthened day by day. And the heart which by God's grace has received such virtues must ever be active and freely expend itself for the benefit and service of the brethren, even as it has received from God.

Forbearance

And here, dear friends, one must not insist upon his rights, but must see what may be useful and helpful to his brother, as St. Paul says, Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient." We are not all equally strong in faith; some of you have a stronger faith than I. Therefore we must not look upon ourselves, or our strength, or our rank, but upon our neighbor, for God has said through Moses, "I have borne and nourished thee, even as a mother her child." How does a mother nourish her child? First, she feeds it with milk, then gruel, then eggs and soft food. If she weaned it and at once gave it the ordinary, coarse food, the child would never thrive. So we should also deal with our brother, have patience with him for a time, suffer his weakness and help him bear it; we should give him milk-food, too, as was done with us, until he likewise grows strong, and thus we do not travel heavenward alone, but bring the brethren, who are not now on our side, with us. If all mothers were to abandon their children, where would we have been? Dear brother, if you have suckled long enough, do not at once cut off the breast, but let thy brother be nourished also. I would not have gone so far as you have done, if I had been here. What you did was good, but you have gone too fast. For there are also brothers and sisters on the other side who belong to us, and must still be won.

1 Cor. 6:12

Deut. 1:31

1 Peter 2:2

Let me illustrate. The sun has two properties, light and heat. No king has power enough to bend or guide the light of the sun; it remains straight in the place where it shines. But the heat may be turned and guided, and yet is ever about the sun. Thus the faith must always remain pure and immovable in the heart, never wavering; but love moves

and is guided, according as our neighbors may grasp it or follow us. There are some who can run, others must walk, still others can hardly creep. Therefore we must not look upon our own, but upon our brother's powers, so that he who is weak in faith, and attempts to follow the strong, may not be destroyed of the devil. Therefore, dear brethren, obey me. I have never been a destroyer, and I was also the very first whom God called to this work. Neither can I run away, but must remain as long as it pleases God. I was the first, too, to whom God revealed it, to preach His Word to you; moreover, I am sure that you have the pure Word of God.

Let us, therefore, take up this matter with fear and humility, cast ourselves at one another's feet, join hands with each other, and help one another. I will do my part, which is no more than my duty, for I love you even as I love my own soul. For here we battle not against pope or bishop, but against the devil, and do you imagine he is asleep? He sleeps not, but sees the true light rising, and to keep it from shining into his eyes he would make a flank attack—and he will succeed, if we are not on our guard. I know him well,[1] and I hope, too, that with the help of God I am his master. But if we yield him but an inch, we must soon look to it how we may be rid of him. Therefore all those have erred who have consented and helped to abolish the mass—in itself a good undertaking, but not accomplished in an orderly way. You say it was right according to the Scriptures. I agree, but what becomes of order? For it was done in wantonness, with no regard to proper order and with offence to your neighbor. If, beforehand, you had called upon God in earnest prayer, and had obtained the aid of the authorities, one could be certain that it had come from God. I, too, would have taken steps toward the same end if it had been a good thing to do; and if the mass were not so evil a thing, I would introduce it again. For I cannot defend your action, as I

Eph. 6:12

Abolishing the Mass

[1] Cp. his experiences at the Wartburg. See KÖSTLIN-KAWERAU, I, 439 ff.

have just said. To the papists and the blockheads I could defend it, for I could say: How do you know whether it was done with good or bad intention, since the work in itself was really a good work? But I can find nothing to reply to the devil. For if on their deathbeds the devil reminds those who began this affair of texts like these, "Every plant, which My father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," or "I have not sent them, yet they ran," how will they be able to withstand?[1] He will cast them into hell. But I have a weapon to brandish in the devil's face, so that the wide world will become too small for him: I know that in spite of my reluctance I was regularly called by the Council to preach in this place. And I would that you should have the same assurance as I. You could so easily have consulted me about the matter.

Matt. 15:13 Jer. 23:21

I was not so far away that you could not reach me with a letter, especially since I did not interfere with you in any way. Did you want to begin something, and then leave me to shoulder the responsibility? That is more than I can undertake, and I will not do it. Here one can see that you have not the Spirit, in spite of your deep knowledge of the Scriptures. Take note of these two things, "must" and "free." The "must" is that which necessity requires, and which must ever be unyielding; as, for instance, the faith, which I shall never permit any one to take away from me, but which I must always keep in my heart and freely confess before every one. But "free" is that in which I have choice, and may use or not, yet in such wise that it profit my brother and not me. Now do not make a "must" out of what is "free," as you have done, so that you may not be called to account for those who were led astray by your exercise of liberty without love. For if you entice any one to eat meat on Friday, and he is troubled about it on his

"Must" and "Free"

[1] Carlstadt, without authority, preached, administered the sacrament and brought about the upheaval in the parish church—Luther's own. He was archdeacon and preacher at the castle church. See Müller, Luther und Karlstadt, 69 and passim.

deathbed, and thinks, Woe is me, for I have eaten meat and I am lost! God will call you to account for that soul. I would like to begin many things, in which but few would follow me; but what is the use? I know that those who have begun this thing, when it comes to the point, cannot maintain themselves, and will be the first to retreat. How would it be, if I brought the people to the point of attack, and though I had been the foremost to exhort others, I would then flee, and not face death with courage? How the poor people would be deceived!

Let us, therefore, feed others also with the milk which we received, until they, too, become strong in the faith. For there are many who are otherwise in accord with us and who would also gladly accept this one thing, but they do not yet fully understand it—all such we drive away. Therefore, let us show love to our neighbors, or our work will not endure. We must have patience with them for a time, and not cast out him who is weak in the faith; much more should we regulate our doing and our not doing according to the demands of love, provided no injury is done to our faith. If we do not earnestly pray to God, and act circumspectly in this matter, the thing looks to me as if all the misery which we have begun to cause the papists will fall upon us. Therefore I could no longer remain away, but was compelled to come and say these things to you.

This is enough about the mass; tomorrow we shall treat of the images.

THE SECOND SERMON

MONDAY AFTER INVOCAVIT

Necessity and Choice

Dear Friends: You heard yesterday the characteristics of a Christian man, how his whole life is faith and love. Faith is directed toward God, love toward man and one's neighbor, and consists in such love and service for him as we have received from God without our work and merit. Thus there are two things: the one, which is the most needful, and which must be done in one way and no other; the other, which is a matter of choice and not of necessity, which may be kept or not, without endangering faith or incurring hell. In both, love must deal with our neighbor in the same manner as God has dealt with us; it must walk the straight road, straying neither to the left nor to the right. In the things which are "musts" and are matters of necessity, such as believing in Christ, love nevertheless never uses force or undue constraint. Thus the mass is an evil thing, and God is displeased with it, because it is performed as a sacrifice and work of merit. Therefore it must be abolished. Here there is no room for question, just as little as if you should ask whether you should pray to God. Here we are entirely agreed: the private mass must be abolished, as I have said in my writings.[1] And I heartily wish it would be abolished everywhere and only the evangelical mass for all the people be retained. Yet Christian love should not employ harshness here nor force the matter. It should be preached and taught with tongue and pen, that to hold mass in such a manner is a sin, but no one should be dragged away from it by force. The matter should be left to God; His word should do the work alone, without our work. Why? Because it is not in my power to fashion the hearts of men as the potter moulds the clay, and to do with them as I please. I can get no farther

[1] In the Open Letter to the Christian Nobility and the Babylonian Captivity. See pp. 125 f., 136 f., and 215 ff. of this volume.

than to men's ears; their hearts I cannot reach. And since I cannot pour faith into their hearts, I cannot, nor should I, force any one to have faith. That is God's work alone, who causes faith to live in the heart. Therefore we should give free course to the Word, and not add our works to it. We have the jus verbi,[1] but not the executio;[2] we should preach the Word, but the consequences must be left to God's own good pleasure.

Compulsion and Persuasion

Now if I should rush in and abolish the mass by force, there are many who would be compelled to consent to it and yet not know their own minds, but say: I do not know if it is right or wrong, I do not know where I stand, I was compelled by force to submit to the majority. And this forcing and commanding results in a mere mockery, an external show, a fool's play, man-made ordinances, sham-saints and hypocrites. For where the heart is not good, I care nothing at all for the work. We must first win the hearts of the people. And that is done when I teach only the Word of God, preach the Gospel and say: "Dear lords or pastors, desist from holding the mass, it is not right, you are sinning when you do it; I cannot refrain from telling you this." But I would not make it an ordinance for them, nor urge a general law; he who would follow me could do so, and he who refused would remain without. In the latter case the Word would sink into the heart and perform its work. Thus he would become convinced and acknowledge his error, and fall away from the mass; to-morrow another would do the same, and thus God would accomplish more with His Word than if you and I would forge into one all power and authority. For if you have won the heart, you have won the whole man—and the mass must finally fall of its own weight and come to an end. And if the hearts and minds of all men are united in the purpose—abolish the mass; but if all are not heart and soul for its abolishment—leave it in God's hands, I beseech you, otherwise the result

[1] Right to speak.
[2] Power to do.

will not be good. Not, indeed, that I would again set up the mass; I let it lie in God's name. Faith must not be chained and imprisoned, nor bound by an ordinance to any work. This is the principle by which you must be governed. For I am sure you will not be able to carry out your plans, and if you should carry them out with such general laws, then I will recant all the things that I have written and preached, and I will not support you, and therefore I ask you plainly: What harm can the mass do to you? You have your faith, pure and strong, toward God, and the mass cannot hurt you.

Paul's Method

Love, therefore, demands that you have compassion on the weak, as all the apostles had. Once, when Paul came to Athens, a mighty city, he found in the temple many altars, and he went from one to the other and looked at them all, but did not touch any one of them even with his foot. But he stood in the midst of the market-place and said they were all idolatrous works, and begged the people to forsake them; yet he did not destroy one of them by force. When the word took hold of their hearts, they forsook their idols of their own accord, and in consequence idolatry fell of itself. Now, if I had seen that they held mass, I would have preached and admonished them concerning it. Had they heeded my admonition, they would have been won; if not, I would nevertheless not have torn them from it by the hair or employed any force, but simply allowed the Word to act, while I prayed for them. For the Word created heaven and earth and all things; the Word must do this thing, and not we poor sinners.

Acts 17:16 ff.

Luther's Method

In conclusion: I will preach it, teach it, write it, but I will constrain no man by force, for faith must come freely without compulsion. Take myself as an example. I have opposed the indulgences and all the papists, but never by orce. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip[1] and with Amsdorf,[2] the Word

[1] Melanchthon. [2] See above, p. 61.

so greatly weakened the papacy, that never a prince or emperor inflicted such damage upon it. I did nothing; the Word did it all. Had I desired to foment trouble, I could have brought great bloodshed upon Germany. Yea, I could have started such a little game at Worms that even the emperor would not have been safe. But what would it have been? A fool's play. I did nothing; I left it to the Word. What do you suppose is Satan's thought, when an effort is made to do things by violence? He sits back in hell and thinks: How fine a game these fools will make for me! But it brings him distress when we only spread the Word, and let it alone do the work. For it is almighty and takes captive the hearts, and if the hearts are captured the evil work will fall of itself. Let me cite an instance. Aforetime there were sects, too, Jewish and Gentile Christians, differing on the law of Moses in respect to circumcision. The former would keep it, the latter not. Then came Paul and preached that it might be kept or not, it mattered not one way or the other; they should make no "must" of it, but leave it to the choice of the individual; to keep it or not, was immaterial. Later came Jerome, who would have made a "must" out of it, and wanted laws and ordinances to prohibit it. Then came St. Augustine, who held to the opinion of St. Paul: it might be kept or not, as one wished; St. Jerome had missed the meaning of St. Paul by a hundred miles. The two doctors bumped heads rather hard over the proposition. But when St. Augustine died, St. Jerome accomplished his purpose. After that came the popes; they would add something of their own, and they, too, made laws. Thus out of the making of one law grew a thousand laws, until they have completely buried us under laws. And so it will be here; one law will soon make two, two will increase to three, and so forth.

1 Cor. 7:18 ff.

Jerome and Augustine

Let this be enough at this time concerning the things that are necessary, and let us beware lest we lead astray those of weak conscience.

THE THIRD SERMON

TUESDAY AFTER INVOCAVIT

We have heard the things most necessary in Christian life, and what is a necessary result, namely, the doing away with the private mass. For the works which are necessary are those which God has either commanded or forbidden, according to the appointment of the Majesty on high. But no one shall be dragged to them by the hair, or kept from them by force, for I can drive no man to heaven with a club. I said this plainly enough, and I believe you understood what I said.

Non-essentials

We shall now consider the things that are not matters of necessity, but are left to our free choice by God, and which we may keep or not; for instance, whether one shall marry or not, or whether monks and nuns shall leave the cloisters. These things are matters of choice and must not be forbidden by any one, and if they are forbidden, the forbidding is wrong, since it is contrary to God's appointment. In the things that are free, such as being married or remaining single, you should do on this wise: If you can restrain yourself without burdening your conscience thereby, do so by all means, but there must be no general law, and every one shall be perfectly free. Any priest, monk or nun who cannot restrain the desires of the flesh, should marry, and thus relieve the burden of conscience. But see to it that you be well-armed and fortified, so that you can stand before God and the world when you are assailed, and especially when the devil attacks you in the hour of death. It is not enough to say: This man or that has done the same, I followed the example of the crowd, according to the preaching of the

provost,[1] or Dr. Carlstadt, or Gabriel,[2] or Michael.[3] Not so, but every one must stand on his own feet and be prepared to give battle to the devil. You must rest upon a strong and clear text of Scripture if you would stand the test. If you cannot do that, you will never withstand,—the devil will pluck you like a withered leaf. Therefore the priests who have taken wives, and the nuns who have taken husbands, in order to save their consciences must stand squarely upon a clear text of Scripture, such as this one by St. Paul—

1 Tim. 4:1 ff.

although there are many more: "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (methinks Paul uses plain language here!) forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created." This text the devil shall not overthrow nor devour, it shall rather overthrow and devour him. Therefore any monk or nun who is too weak to keep the vow of chastity, should conscientiously examine himself; if heart and conscience are strong, so that he can defend himself with a good conscience, let him marry. Would to God all monks and nuns could hear this sermon and properly understood this matter and would all forsake the cloisters and thus all the cloisters in the world cease to exist—this is my earnest desire. But now they have no understanding of the matter (for no one preaches it to them), and hearing that in other places many are leaving the cloisters, who however are well-prepared for such a step, they would follow their example, but have not yet fortified their consciences and do not know that it is a matter of liberty. This is bad, although it is better that the evil should be outside than inside.[4] Therefore I say, what God has made free

Marriage of Monks and Nuns

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[1] Justus Jonas, provost at the castle church.

[2] Gabriel Zwilling, an Augustinian, who, next to Carlstadt, was the leader in forcing the reforms which Luther is here discussing. See Introduction, p. 388.

[3] Was Luther led by the name of Gabriel to add a last touch by the mention of the other archangel, in the thought of St. Paul, that even an angel from heaven cannot change the Gospel, Gal. 1:8. See note in Weimar Ed., X², 438. See also a similar outburst in a letter to Johann Lang in 1516, six years previous, where Gabriel Biel's name furnished the incitement. ENDERS, I, 54; SMITH, I, 42.

[4] Namely, of the monasteries.

shall remain free, and you must not obey if some one forbids it, even as the pope has done, the Antichrist. He who can do so without harm and for love of his neighbor, may wear a cowl or a tonsure, since it will not injure his faith; wearing a cowl will not kill him.

Thus, dear friends, it is plain enough, and I believe you ought to understand it and not make liberty a law, saying: This priest has taken a wife, therefore all priests must take wives. Not at all. Or this monk or that nun has left the cloister, therefore they must all come out. Not at all. Or this man has broken the images and burnt them, therefore all images must be burned—not at all, dear brother! And again, this priest has no wife, therefore no priest dare marry. Not at all! They who cannot retain their chastity should take wives, and for others who can be chaste, it is good that they restrain themselves, as those who live in the spirit and not in the flesh. Neither should they be troubled about the vows they have made, such as the monks' vows of obedience, chastity and poverty (though they are rich enough withal). For we cannot vow anything that is contrary to God's commands. God has made it a matter of liberty to marry or not to marry, and thou fool undertakest to turn this liberty into a vow against the ordinance of God? Therefore you must leave liberty alone and not make a compulsion out of it; your vow is contrary to God's liberty. Suppose I should vow to strike my father on the mouth, or to steal some one's property, do you believe God would be pleased with such a vow? And as little as I ought to keep a vow to strike my father on the mouth, so little ought I to abstain from marriage because I am bound by a vow of chastity, for in both cases God has ordered it otherwise. God has ordained that I should be free to eat fish or flesh, and there should be no commandment concerning them. Therefore all the Carthusians[1] and all monks and nuns forsake the ordinance and liberty which God has given when they believe that if they eat meat they are defiled.

Monks' Vows

[1] A monastic order, founded 1084, noted for the strictness of its rule.

The Images

But we must come to the images, and concerning them also it is true that they are unnecessary, and we are free to have them or not, although it would be much better if we did not have them. I am not partial to them. A great controversy arose on the subject of images between the Roman emperor and the pope; the emperor held that he had the authority to banish the images, but the pope insisted that they should remain, and both were wrong. Much blood was shed, but the pope emerged as victor and the emperor lost.[1] What was it all about? They wished to make a "must" out of that which is free, and that God cannot tolerate. Do you wish to change the ordering of the Majesty on high? Not so; you will not do any such thing. You read in the Ex. 20:4 Law, Exodus xx, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." There you take your stand; that is your ground. Now let us see! When our adversaries shall say: The first commandment aims at this, that we should worship one God alone and not any image, even as it is said immediately following, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them," and declare that the worship of images is forbidden and not the making of them, they disturb and unsettle our foundation for us. And if you reply: The text says, "Thou shalt not make any images," they answer: It also says, "Thou shalt not worship them." In the face of such uncertainty who would be so bold as to destroy the images? Not I. But let us go farther. They say: Did not Noah, Abraham, Jacob build altars? And who will deny Num. 21:9 that? We must admit it. Again, did not Moses erect a brazen serpent, as we read in his fourth book? How can you say Moses forbids the making of images when he him-

[1] The Iconoclastic controversy in the Eastern church, which called forth the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nice in 787, whose decrees were favorable to images in the churches. The controversy, which raged for over a century, was finally settled in 843. Since the promulgation of this decree the First Sunday in Lent has been celebrated annually as the "Feast of Orthodoxy." See Realencyk., III, 222 ff.

self makes one? It seems to me, such a serpent is an image, too. How shall we answer that? Again, do we not read that two birds were erected on the mercy-seat, the very place where God willed that He should be worshiped? Here we must admit, that we may make images and have images, but we must not worship them, and when they are worshiped, they should be put away and destroyed, just as King Hezekiah brake in pieces the serpent erected by Moses. And who will be so bold as to say, when called to account: They worship the images. They will answer: Art thou the man who dares to accuse us of worshiping the images? Do not believe that they will acknowledge it. To be sure it is true, but we cannot make them admit it. Remember how they acted when I condemned works without faith. They said: Do you believe that we have no faith, or that our works are performed without faith? I can do nothing more than put my flute back in its pocket; give them a hair's breadth, and they take a hundred miles.

Moses and Images

Ex. 37:7

2 Kings 18:4

Therefore it should have been preached that images were nothing and that God is not served by their erection, and they would have fallen of themselves. That is what I did; that is what Paul did in Athens, when he went into their churches and saw all their idols.[1] He did not strike at any of them, but stood in the market-place and said, "Ye men of Athens, ye are all idolatrous." He preached against their idols, but he overthrew none by force. And you would rush in, create an uproar, break down the altars and overthrow the images? Do you really believe you can abolish the images on this wise? Nay, you will only set them up more firmly. Even if you overthrew the images in this place, do you think you have overthrown those in Nürnberg and the rest of the world? Not at all. St. Paul, as we read in the Book of Acts, sat in a ship on whose prow were painted or carved the Twin Brothers.[2] He went on board and did not bother about it at all, neither did he break them off. Why

Acts 17:22

Acts 28:11

[1] See above, p. 399.

[2] i. e., Castor and Pollux.

St. Paul and the Twins

must Luke describe the Twins at this place? Without doubt he wanted to show that outward things could do no harm to faith, if only the heart does not cleave to them nor put its trust in them. This is what we must preach and teach, and let the Word alone do the work, as I said before. The Word must first capture the hearts of men and enlighten them,—we cannot do it. Therefore the apostles gloried in their service, ministerium, and not in its effect, executio.

We will let this be enough for to-day, and pray God for His grace.

THE FOURTH SERMON

WEDNESDAY AFTER INVOCAVIT

Dear Friends: We have heard the things which are necessary, as for instance, that the mass is regarded as a sacrifice.[1] Then we considered the things which are left to our liberty, such as marriage, the monastic life, the abolishing of images. We have treated these four subjects, and have said that in all these matters love is the captain. On the subject of images, in particular, we saw that they ought to be abolished if they are going to be worshiped, otherwise not, although I wish they were abolished everywhere because they are abused,—it is useless to deny it. For whoever places an image in a church, imagines he has performed a service unto God and a good work, which is downright idolatry. And this, the greatest, foremost and highest reason for abolishing the images, you have neglected, and taken up the very lowest. For I suppose there is scarcely any man who does not understand that yonder crucifix is not my God, for my God is in heaven, but that this is simply a sign. But the world is full of the other abuse, for who would place an image of silver or of wood in a church, if he did not think that in so doing he was doing God a service? Think you that Duke Frederick, the bishop of Halle, and the others would have placed so many silver images in the churches, if they thought it counted nothing before God? Nay, they would not do it. But this is not sufficient reason to abolish, destroy and burn all the images; and why?

The Abuse of Images

[1] Luther's great objection to the mass was its turning of the Sacrament into a sacrifice. This view of the mass was for him an utter perversion of the gospel, and, therefore, comes under the category of essentials. See Vol. I, pp. 309 ff., and above, pp. 211 ff.

Because we must admit that there are still people who have not the wrong opinion of them, but to whom they may be useful. Although they are few, yet we cannot and should not condemn anything which is still useful to the devotions of any man. But you should have taught that images are nothing, God cares nothing for them, and that He is not served, nor pleased when we make an image for Him, but that we would do better to give a poor man a gold-piece than to give God a golden image, for God has forbidden the latter, but not the former. If they had heard this teaching, that images count for nothing, they would have ceased of their own accord, and the images would have fallen without any uproar or tumult, even as it was already coming to pass.

The Devil's Game

We must, therefore, be on our guard, for the devil is after us, through his apostles, with all his craft and cunning. Now, although it is true, and no one can deny that the images are evil because they are abused, nevertheless we must not on that account reject them, nor condemn anything because it is abused. That would result in utter confusion. God has commanded us not to lift up our eyes unto the sun, etc., that we may not worship them, for they are created to serve all nations. But there are many people who worship the sun and the stars. Shall we, therefore, essay to pull the sun and stars from the skies? Nay, we will not do it. Again, wine and women bring many a man to misery and make a fool of him. Shall we, therefore, kill all the women and pour out all the wine? Again, gold and silver cause much evil, shall we, therefore, condemn them? Nay, if we would drive away our one worst enemy, who does us the most harm, we would have to kill ourselves, for we have no greater enemy than our own heart, even as Jeremiah says, "The heart of man is crooked," or, as I take the meaning, "always twisting to one side or the other." And what good would that do us?

Deut. 4:19

Jer. 17:9

He who would blacken the devil must have good charcoal, for he, too, wears fine clothes and goes to the fair. But I can catch him by asking him: Do you not place the images in the churches because you think it a special service

of God? and when he says Yes, as he must, you may conclude that what was meant as a service of God he has turned into idolatry by abusing the images; he eagerly sought what God has not commanded and neglected God's positive command, to help the neighbor. But I have not yet caught him; he escapes me by saying: I help the poor, too; cannot I give to my neighbor and at the same time place images in churches? That is not true,—for who would not rather give his neighbor a gold-piece, than God a golden image! Nay, he would not trouble himself about placing images in churches if he believed that God was not served thereby. Therefore I freely admit, images are neither here nor there, neither evil nor good, we may have them or not, as we please. This trouble has been caused by you; the devil would not have accomplished it with me, for I cannot deny that it is possible to find some one to whom images are useful. And if I were asked about it, I would confess that none of these things give offence to me, and if just one man were found upon earth who used the images aright, the devil would soon draw the conclusion against me: Why condemnest thou that which is still useful in worship? This challenge I could not answer; he would have successfully defied me. He would not have got nearly so far if I had been here. He played a bold game, and won, although it does no harm to the Word of God. You wanted to paint the devil black, but forgot the charcoal and used chalk. If you would fight the devil, you must be well versed in the Scriptures, and, besides, use them at the right time.

Of Meats

Let us proceed and speak of the eating of meats. It is true that we are free to eat any mannner of food, meats, fish, eggs or butter. This no one can deny. God has given us this liberty. That is true; nevertheless we must know how to use our liberty, and treat the weak brother differently from the stubborn. Observe, then, how you must use this liberty.

First of all, If you cannot give up meat without harm to yourself, or if you are sick, you may eat whatever you like, and if any one takes offence, let him be offended. And if

the whole world took offence, yet you are not committing a sin, for God can excuse you in view of the liberty He has so graciously bestowed upon you, and of the necessities of your health, which would be endangered by your abstinence.

Liberty and Law

Secondly, If you should be pressed to eat fish instead of meat on Friday, and to eat fish and abstain from eggs and butter during Lent, etc., as the pope has done with his fools' laws, then you must in no wise allow yourself to be drawn away from the liberty in which God has placed you, but do just the contrary to spite him, and say: Because you forbid me to eat meat, and presume to turn my liberty into law, I will eat meat in spite of you. And thus you must do in all other things which are matters of liberty. To give you an example: If the pope, or any one else would force me to wear a cowl, just as he prescribes it, I would take off the cowl just to spite him. But since it is left to my own free choice, I wear it or take it off, according to my pleasure.

Thirdly, There are some who are still weak in faith, who ought to be instructed, and who would gladly believe as we do. But their ignorance prevents them, and if this were faithfully preached to them, as it was to us, they would be one with us. Toward such well-meaning people we must assume an entirely different attitude from that which we assume toward the stubborn. We must bear patiently with them and not use our liberty, since it brings no peril or harm to body or soul, nay, rather is salutary, and we are doing our brothers and sisters a great service besides. But if we use our liberty without need, and deliberately cause offence to our neighbor, we drive away the very one who in time would come to our faith. Thus St. Paul circumcised Timothy because simple-minded Jews had taken offence; he thought, What harm can it do, since they are offended because of their ignorance? But when, in Antioch, they would insist that he ought and must circumcise Titus, Paul withstood them all and to spite them would not have Titus circumcised. And he held his ground. He did the same when St. Peter by the

Acts 16:3

Gal. 2:3

Gal. 2:11 ff.

exercise of his liberty caused a wrong conception in the minds of the unlearned. It was on this wise: When Peter was with the Gentiles, he ate pork and sausage with them, but when the Jews came in, he would not touch this food and ate no more with them. Then the Gentiles who had become Christians, thought: Alas! we, too, must be like the Jews, eat no pork and live according to the law of Moses. But when Paul found that it would injure the liberty of the Gospel, he reproved Peter publicly and read him an apostolic lecture, saying: "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Thus we, too, should order our lives and use our liberty at the proper time, so that Christian liberty may suffer no injury, and no offence be given to our weak brothers and sisters who are still without the knowledge of this liberty.

Peter and the Gentiles

Gal. 2:14

THE FIFTH SERMON: A SERMON ON THE SACRAMENT

THURSDAY AFTER INVOCAVIT

We have heard of the things that are necessary, such as the mass, which is regarded as a sacrifice,[1] and of the unnecessary things, such as the leaving of monasteries by monks, the marriage of priests, and the images. We have seen how we must treat these matters, that no compulsion or law must be made of them, and that no one shall be dragged from them by the hair, but that we must let the Word of God alone do the work. Let us now consider how we must observe the blessed sacrament.

Foolish Law of the Pope

You have heard how I preached against the foolish law of the pope and opposed his precept,[2] that no woman shall wash the altar-linen on which the body of Christ has lain, even if it be a pure nun, except it first be washed by a pure priest. Likewise, when any one touches the body of Christ with the hand, the priests come running and scrape his fingers, and much more of the same sort. But when a priest is incontinent, the pope winks at it. If the woman bears a child, he lets that pass, too. The altar-linen and the sacrament, however, dare not be touched.

Against such fools' laws we have preached, and set forth that no sin is involved in these foolish prescriptions of the pope, and that a layman does not commit sin if he touch the cup or the body of Christ with his hands. You should give thanks to God that you have come to such clear knowledge, which many great men have lacked. But now you have become just as foolish as the pope, with your notion that you

[1] See above, p. 407, note 1.
[2] Cf. above, p. 282.

must handle the sacrament; you would prove that you are good Christians by touching the sacrament with your hands. You have dealt with the sacrament, our highest treasure, in such a way that it is a wonder you were not struck down by thunder and lightning. The other things God would have suffered you to do, but to make this a matter of compulsion, He can in no wise tolerate. And if you do not recede from this, neither the emperor nor any one else need drive me from you, I will go without urging; yea, I dare say, none of my enemies, although they have caused me much sorrow, have wounded me as you have wounded me in this matter. If you would show that you are good Christians by handling the sacrament, and boast of it before everybody, then indeed Herod and Pilate are the chief and best Christians. Methinks they handled the body of Christ when they had him nailed to the cross and put to death.

Handling the Sacrament

Nay, my dear friends, the kingdom of God consists not in outward things, which can be touched or perceived, but in faith. But you may say: We live and should live in accordance with the Scriptures, and God has instituted the sacrament in such a manner that we should take it with our hands, for He said: "Take and eat, this is my body." Answer: Though I am convinced beyond a doubt that the disciples of the Lord took it with their hands, and though I admit that you may do the same without committing sin, nevertheless I can neither make it compulsory nor prove that it is the only way. And my reason therefor is this: when the devil, in his seeking after us, argues, Where have you read in the Scriptures that "take" means "seizing with the hands"?—how shall I prove or defend it? Nay, how will I answer him when he cites, from the Scriptures, the very opposite, and proves that "take" does not mean to receive with the hands only, but also to convey to ourselves in other ways? "See, my good fellow," so he says, "how the word 'take' is used by three Evangelists in describing the taking of gall and vinegar by the Lord. You must admit that the

Luke 17:20
1 Cor. 4:20
Matt. 26:26
What does "Take" mean?
Matt. 27:34
Mark 15:23

Luke 23:26 Lord did not touch or handle it with His hands, for His hands were nailed to the cross." This verse is a strong Luke 7:16 argument against me. Again, he cites the passage: Et accepit omnes timor,—"And fear took hold on all," where again we must admit that fear has no hands. Thus I am driven into a corner and must concede, even against my will, that "take" means not only to receive with the hands, but to convey to myself in any other way in which it can be done. So you see, dear friends, we must be on firm ground, if we are to withstand the devil's attack. Although I must acknowledge that you committed no sin when you touched the sacrament with your hands, nevertheless I must tell you that it was not a good work, because it caused offence everywhere. For the universal custom is, to receive the blessed sacrament directly from the hands of the priest. Why will you not herein also serve those who are weak in the faith and abstain from your liberty? It does not help you if you do it, nor harm you if you do it not.

Therefore no new practices should be introduced, unless the Gospel has first been thoroughly preached and understood, even as it has been with you. On this account, dear friends, let us deal soberly and wisely in the things that pertain to God, for God will not be mocked. You may mock the saints, but with God it is vastly different. Therefore, I pray you, give up this practice.

Both Kinds in the Sacrament

Let us now speak of the two kinds. Although I hold that it is necessary that the sacrament should be received in both kinds, according to the institution of the Lord, nevertheless it must not be made compulsory nor a general law. We must occupy ourselves with the Word, practice it and preach it. For the result we should look entirely to the Word, and let every one have his liberty in this matter. Where that is not done, the sacrament becomes an external observance and a hypocrisy, which is just what the devil wants. But when the Word is given free course and is not bound to any observance, it takes hold of one to-day and falls into his heart,

to-morrow it touches another, and so on. Thus quietly and soberly it will do its work, and no one will know how it all came about.

I was glad to know when some one wrote me, that some people in this city had begun to receive the sacrament in both kinds. You should have allowed it to remain thus and not have forced it into a law. But now you go at it pell-mell, and headlong force every one to it. Dear friends, you will not succeed in that way. And if you desire to be regarded as better Christians than others, by this that you take the sacrament into your hands and receive it in both kinds, you are really poor Christians indeed! In this way even a sow could be a Christian, for she has a big enough snout to receive the sacrament outwardly. We must deal soberly with such high things. Dear friends, this dare be no mockery, and if you would heed me, give it up. If you will not heed me, no one need drive me away from you—I will leave you unbidden, and I shall regret that I ever preached so much as one sermon in this place. The other things could be passed by, but this cannot be passed by; you have gone so far that men say: "At Wittenberg there are very good Christians, for they take the sacrament with the hands and handle the cup, and then they go to their brandy and drink until they are drunken." Thus are the weak and simple-minded men driven away, who would come to us if as much instruction had been given to them as was given to us.

But if there is any one so stupid that he must touch the sacrament with his hands, let him have it brought home to his house and there let him handle it to his heart's content. But in public let him abstain, since that will not bring him harm and the offence will be avoided which is caused to our brothers, sisters and neighbors, who are now so angry with us that they are ready to kill us. I may say that none of the enemies who have opposed me until now have brought so much grief upon me as you.

This is enough for to-day; we shall continue on the morrow.

THE SIXTH SERMON

FRIDAY AFTER INVOCAVIT

The Reception of the Sacrament

In our discussion of the chief things we have come to the reception of the sacrament, which we have not yet finished. To-day we shall see how we must conduct ourselves here, and also who is worthy to receive the sacrament and who belongs there.

It is very necessary here that your hearts and consciences be well instructed, so that you distinguish well between the outward reception and the inner and spiritual reception. This is the bodily and outward reception, when a man receives with his mouth the body of Christ and His blood. Any man can receive the sacrament in this way, for such reception may be without faith and love. But that reception does not make a man a Christian, for if it did, even a mouse would be a Christian, for it can likewise eat the bread and drink out of the cup. It is such a simple thing to do. But the true, inner, spiritual reception is a very different thing, for it consists in the right use of the sacrament and of its fruits.

I would say in the first place that such reception is the true inner one, and is a reception in faith. We Christians have no other outward sign by which we may be distinguished from others than this sacrament and baptism; but a mere outward reception, without faith, amounts to nothing. There must be faith to make one well prepared for the reception and acceptable before God, otherwise it is all sham and a mere external show, which is not Christianity at all. Christianity is a thing of faith, which is never bound to any external work.

The One Requisite: Faith

But faith (which we all must have, if we wish to go to the sacrament worthily) is a firm trust, that Christ, the Son of God, stands in our place and has taken all our sins upon His shoulders, that He is the eternal satisfaction for our sin and reconciles us with God the Father. He who has this faith belongs to this sacrament, and neither devil nor hell nor sin can harm him. Do you ask why? Because God is his protector and defender. And when I have this faith, then I am certain God is fighting for me; I can defy devil, death, hell and sin, and all the harm with which they threaten me. This is the great, inestimable treasure given us in Christ, which the words of man fail to describe. Only faith can take hold of the heart, and not every one has such faith. Therefore this sacrament must not be made a law, as the most holy father, the pope, has done with his fools' commandment: All Christians must go to the sacrament at the holy Eastertide, and he who does not go shall not be buried in consecrated ground.[1] Is it not a foolish law which the pope has set up? You ask why? Because we are not all alike; we do not all have equal faith; the faith of one is stronger than that of another. It is therefore impossible that the sacrament can be made a law, and the greatest sins are committed at Easter solely on account of this unchristian command, which would drive everybody to the sacrament. And if all robbery, usury, unchastity and all the other sins were cast upon one great heap, this sin would overtop it—even at the time and place of seeming greatest holiness. And why? Because the pope can look into no one's heart to see whether he has faith or not.

The Result: Assurance

But if you believe that God is with you and stakes all His treasures and His blood for you, as if He said: Fall in behind Me without fear or delay, and then let come what may to attempt thy harm, let devil, death, sin and hell and all creation try it, I shall go before thee, for I will be thy captain and thy shield, trust Me and rely upon Me com-

[1] In the canon law, C. 12, X, de poenitentiis.

pletely—he who believes thus cannot be harmed by devil, hell, sin or death; if God fights for him, what can you do to him?

Who are Worthy

He who has such faith is fit for the altar and receives the sacrament as an assurance, or seal, or sign to assure him of God's promises and grace. But such faith we do not all have; would to God one-tenth of the Christians had it! See, such rich, immeasurable treasures, which God in His grace showers upon us, cannot be the possession of every one, but only of those who suffer either bodily or spiritual adversity: the bodily through the persecution of man, and the spiritual by despair of conscience; outwardly or inwardly, when the devil causes your heart to be weak, timid and discouraged, so that you know not how you stand with God, and when he reproaches you with your sins. And in such terrified and trembling hearts alone God desires to dwell, as the prophet Isaiah says. For he who has not felt the battle within him, is not distressed by his sins nor has a daily quarrel with them, and wishes no protector, defender and shield to stand before him, is not yet ready for this food. This food demands a hungering and longing man, for it delights to enter a hungering soul, one that is in constant battle with its sins and eager to be rid of them.

Isa. 66:2

He who is not thus prepared should abstain for a while from this sacrament, for this food is not for a sated and full heart, and if it comes to such, it is harmful. Therefore, if we think upon, and feel within us, such distress of conscience and the fear of a timid heart, we shall come with all humbleness and reverence, and not rush to it pell-mell, with insolence and without fear and humility. We are not always fit for it; to-day I have the grace, and am fit for it, but not to-morrow, yea, it may be that for six months I have no desire nor fitness for it.

Therefore are they the most worthy who are constantly vexed by death and the devil, and they receive it most opportunely, to remind them and strengthen them in the faith that no harm can come unto them, for He is now with

them, from Whom no one can take them away; let come death or devil or sin, they cannot do them harm.

This is what Christ did, when He prepared to institute the blessed sacrament. He brought anguish upon His disciples and trembling to their hearts when He said that He would go away from them, and again they were tormented when He said: One of you shall betray me. Think you not that that cut them to the heart? Truly, they received the word with all fear, and sat there as though they were all traitors to God. And after He had made them all tremble with fear and sorrow, then only did He institute the blessed sacrament as a comfort, and consoled them again. For this bread is a comfort for the sorrowing, a healing for the sick, a life for the dying, a food for all the hungry, and a rich treasure for all the poor and needy.[1]

Matt. 26:2

Matt. 26:21

Let this be enough at this time concerning the proper use of this sacrament. I commend you to God.

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[1] On the last four paragraphs, cf. above, pp. 15 f.

THE SEVENTH SERMON

SATURDAY BEFORE REMINISCERE

Yesterday we heard of the use of the holy and blessed sacrament and saw who are worthy to receive it, even those in whom is the fear of death, who have timid and despairing consciences and who live in fear of hell. All such come prepared to partake of this food for the strengthening of their weak faith and the comforting of their conscience. This is the true and right use of this sacrament, and whoever does not find himself in this state, let him refrain from coming until God also takes hold of him and draws him through His Word.

Fruit of the Sacrament: Love

We shall now speak of the fruit of this sacrament, which is love; that is, that we should treat our neighbor even as God has treated us. Now we have received from God naught but love and favor, for Christ has pledged and given us His righteousness and everything that He has, has poured out upon us all His treasures, which no man can measure and no angel can understand or fathom, for God is a glowing furnace of love, reaching even from the earth to the heavens.

Love, I say, is a fruit of this sacrament. But I do not yet perceive it among you here in Wittenberg, although there is much preaching of love and you ought to practice it above all other things. This is the principal thing, and alone is seemly in a Christian. But no one shows eagerness for this, and you want to do all sorts of unnecessary things, which are of no account. If you do not want to show yourselves Christians by your love, then leave the other things undone, too, for St. Paul says in I Corinthians, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

1 Cor. 13:1

This is a terrible saying of Paul. And further: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries of God, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." You have not got so far as that, although you have received great and rich gifts from God, especially a knowledge of the Scriptures. It is true, you have the pure Gospel and the true Word of God, but no one as yet has given his goods to the poor, no one has yet been burned, and even these things would profit nothing without love. You would take all of God's goods in the sacrament, and yet not pour them forth again in love. One will not lend the other a helping hand, no one thinks first of another, but every one looks out for himself and his own gain, seeks but his own and lets everything else go as it will,—if anybody is helped, well and good. No one looks after the poor or seeks how to help them. It is pitiful. You have heard many sermons about it and all my books are full of it and have the one purpose, to urge you to faith and love.

1 Cor. 13:2, 3

The Lack of Love

And if you will not love one another, God will send a great plague upon you; let this be a warning to you, for God will not reveal His Word and have it preached in vain. You are tempting God too far, my friends. If some one in times past had preached the Word to our forefathers, they would perchance have acted differently. Or if the Word were preached to-day to many poor children in the cloisters, they would receive it with much greater joy than you. You do not heed it at all, and give yourselves to other things, which are unnecessary and foolish.

I commend you to God.

THE EIGHTH SERMON

A SHORT SUMMARY[1] OF THE SERMON OF DR. M. LUTHER DELIVERED ON REMINISCERE SUNDAY ON PRIVATE CONFESSION

Now we have heard all the things which ought to be considered here, except confession. Of this we shall speak now.

Confession before the Congregation

In the first place, There is a confession which is founded on the Scriptures; namely, when some one commits a sin publicly, or with other men's knowledge, and is accused before the congregation. If he abandons his sin, they intercede for him with God. But if he will not hear the congregation, he is excluded from the church and cast out, so that no one will have anything to do with him. And this confession is commanded by God in Matthew xviii, "If thy brother trespass against thee (so that thou and others are offended), go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Of this confession there is no longer even a trace to be found, and in this particular the Gospel is put aside in this place. He who could reëstablish it would perform a good work. Here is where you ought to have taken pains and reëstablished this kind of confession, and let the other things go. For by this no one would have been offended, and it would have been accomplished without disturbance. It should be done in this way: When you see a usurer, adulterer, thief or drunkard, you should go to him in secret and admonish him to give up his sin. If he will not hear, you should take two others with you and admonish him once more, in a brotherly way, to give up his sin. But if he scorns that, you should tell the pastor before the whole congregation, have your witnesses with you, and accuse him before the pastor in the presence of the people, saying:

Matt. 18:15

[1] On this title, see Introduction, p. 389.

"Dear pastor, this man has done this and that, and would not receive our brotherly admonition to give up his sin. Therefore I accuse him, together with my witnesses who were present." And then, if he will not give up and willingly acknowledge his guilt, the pastor should exclude him and put him under the ban before the whole assembly, for the sake of the congregation, until he comes to himself and is received back again. This would be Christian. But I cannot undertake to carry it out single-handed.

Confession to God

Secondly, A confession is necessary for us, when we go away in a corner by ourselves, and confess to God Himself and pour out before Him all our faults. And this confession is also commanded. From this comes the familiar word of Scripture: "Facite judicium et justitiam." Judicium facere est nos ipsos accusare et damnare; justitiam autem facere est fidere misericordiae Dei.[1] As it is written, "Blessed are they that keep judgment and do righteousness at all times." The judgment is nothing else than a man's knowing and judging and condemning himself, and this is true humility and self-abasement. The righteousness is nothing else than a man's knowing himself and praying to God for the mercy and help through which God raises him up again. This is what David means when he says: "I have sinned; I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord," and, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin; for this all Thy saints shall pray unto Thee."

Gen. 18:19

Ps. 106:3

Ps. 32:5 f.

Confession to a Brother

Thirdly, There is also a confession when one takes another aside, and tells him what troubles him, so that he may hear from him a word of comfort; and this confession is commanded by the pope. It is this urging and forcing which I condemned when I wrote concerning confession,[2] and I refuse to go to confession just because the pope wishes it

[1] "Let there be judgment and righteousness." To keep judgment is to accuse and condemn ourselves; but to do righteousness is to trust in the mercy of God.

[2] The treatise Von der Beichte, ob die der Papst Macht habe zu gebieten, written during the sojourn on the Wartburg. See Weimar Ed., VIII, 129; Erl. Ed., XXVII, 318.

and has commanded it. For I wish him to keep his hands off the confession and not make of it a compulsion or command, which he has not the power to do. Yet I will let no man take private confession away from me, and I would not give it up for all the treasures in the world, since I know what comfort and strength it has given me. No one knows what it can do for him except one who has struggled much with the devil. Yea, the devil would have slain me long ago, if the confession had not sustained me. For there are many doubts which a man cannot resolve by himself, and so he takes a brother aside and tells him his trouble. What harm is there, if he humbles himself a little before his neighbor, puts himself to shame, looks for a word of comfort from him, and takes it to himself and believes it, as if he heard it from God himself, as we read in Matthew xviii: "If two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them."

Matt. 18:19

Many Absolutions

And we must have many absolutions, so that we may strengthen our timid consciences and despairing hearts against the devil and against God. Therefore no man shall forbid the confession nor keep or drive any one away from it. And if any one wrestles with his sins, is eager to be rid of them and looks for some assurance from the Scriptures, let him go and confess to another in secret, and receive what is said to him there as if it came directly from God's own lips. Whoever has the strong and firm faith that his sins are forgiven, may ignore this confession and confess to God alone. But how many have such a strong faith? Therefore, as I have said, I will not let this private confession be taken from me. Yet I would force no one to it, but leave the matter to every one's free will.

Five Comforts for the Conscience

For our God is not so miserly that He has left us with only one comfort or strengthening for our conscience, or one absolution, but we have many absolutions in the Gospel, and are showered richly with them. For instance, we have this in the Gospel: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Another comfort

Matt. 6:14

we have in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses," etc. A third is our baptism, when I reason thus: See, my Lord, I am baptized in Thy name so that I may be assured of Thy grace and mercy. After that we have the private confession, when I go and receive a sure absolution as if God Himself spake it, so that I may be assured that my sins are forgiven. Finally I take to myself the blessed sacrament, when I eat His body and drink His blood as a sign that I am rid of my sins and God has freed me from all my frailties; and in order to make me sure of this, He gives me His body to eat and His blood to drink, so that I shall not and cannot despair: I cannot doubt I have a gracious God. Matt. 6:12

Thus we see that confession must not be despised, but that it is a true comfort. And since we need many absolutions and comforts, because we must fight against the devil, death, hell and sin, we must not allow any of our weapons to be taken away, but keep intact the whole armor and equipment which God has given us for use against our enemies. For you do not yet know what work it is to fight with the devil and to overcome him. I know it well; I have eaten salt with him once or twice.[1] I know him well, and he knows me well, too. If only you knew him, you would not in this manner drive out confession.

I commend you to God. Amen.

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[1] See above, p. 394.

THAT DOCTRINES OF MEN ARE TO BE REJECTED

TOGETHER WITH

A REPLY TO TEXTS QUOTED IN DEFENCE OF THE DOCTRINES OF MEN

(VON MENSCHENLEHREN ZU MEIDEN)

1522

INTRODUCTION

"Silver and gold have I none: but such as I have give I thee." Somewhat in the spirit of these words Luther had planned to dedicate a small book to his host of the Wartburg, Hans von Berlepsch. For a time Luther had thought that von Berlepsch himself was bearing the expense of his entertainment in that retreat, and that he was being more royally treated than he deserved. Not only the material comforts with which he was surrounded appealed to him, however. Von Berlepsch was interested in Luther and in Luther's work. He talked with him seriously on religious questions, and expressed a desire to have more information, particularly concerning the authority of the teachings of the Roman Church which had no direct warrant in Scripture.

To this desire of von Berlepsch we can trace the origin of our treatise, That the Doctrines of Men are to be Rejected. There is no dedication to von Berlepsch, however, and no reference to the months of companionship on the Wartburg. Luther returned from the Wartburg early in March, 1522, and on the 28th of March sent the first part of the treatise to Spalatin, with the request that it be forwarded to von Berlepsch. The second part, the Reply to Texts Quoted in Defence of the Doctrines of Men, was added in a second edition.

This was not the only writing forwarded to von Berlepsch in memory of the pleasant days spent on the Wartburg. Perhaps of even greater interest was the gift sent on September 25, 1522—one of the first complete copies of the German New Testament.

Buchwald has called our treatise "a model of sound explanation of the Scriptures for the purpose of refuting error." We must caution the reader, however, not to think of Luther's occasional statements concerning the authority of Scripture as final. Luther is still largely upon medieval ground, accepting the premise of the Roman Church, and refuting the practice of the popes, priests and monks from the fundamental assumption of the authority of the Scriptures. The succeeding years, the controversies with the leaders of the peasants and with the heavenly prophets, led him to clearer views. Where in this treatise he wrote, "The same things which are found in the Books of Moses are found in the others. For the other books do no more than show how in the course of history the word of Moses was kept or not kept," he was thinking of the one Gospel which he found everywhere in the Scriptures. But he distinguished

carefully between the permanent and the temporary in the Books of Moses and elsewhere, and speaks of "that which God has decreed" in the Old Testament as having "come to an end, and no longer binding the consciences of men" (p. 442). That which is permanent is the Gospel, "for it is beyond question that all the Scriptures point to Christ alone" (p. 432). Probably the clearest statement of his views is found in a sermon preached in 1527: "The Word was given in many ways from the beginning. We must not only ask whether it is God's Word, whether God spoke it, but much more, to whom He spoke it, whether it applies to you or to another." "The false prophets rush in and say, 'Dear people, this is God's Word.' It is true, and we cannot deny it; but we are not the people to whom He speaks" (Erl. Ed., 33, 16.)

In reading the treatise, therefore, it will be well to consider when it was written and for whom; and not to think of it as a final statement of Luther's views on the authority of the Scriptures.

The treatise is found in the original German in Weimar Ed., X^2; in Erlangen, 28, 318–343; in Berlin, 2, 289–314.

W. A. LAMBERT.

South Bethlehem, Pa.

THAT WE ARE TO REJECT THE DOCTRINES OF MEN:

TOGETHER WITH A REPLY TO THE TEXTS QUOTED IN DEFENCE OF THE DOCTRINES OF MEN

To all who read or hear this little book may God grant grace and understanding. Amen.

I, Martin Luther, have published this brief book for the comfort and saving of the poor consciences which are by the law of men held in bondage in monasteries and convents; that they may be able to arm and strengthen themselves with the Word of God, so as to be steadfast in the pains of death and other trials. But those who are overbold and unruly, who give no other evidence of being Christians except that they can eat eggs, meat and milk, stay away from confession and break the images, etc.,—these I warn that I do not wish my words to help them. For I regard them as the filthy people who defiled the camp of Israel, although such cleanliness was enjoined upon the people that a man was required to go outside the camp to ease himself and to cover up with earth that which came from him. We also must endure these unclean lapwings in our nest, until God teach them manners. This Christian liberty I would have preached only to poor, humble, captive consciences, so that poor children, nuns and monks, who would like to escape from their bondage may inform their consciences how they may do so with God's approval and without danger, and use their freedom in an orderly and Christian way. May God grant His blessing. Amen.

Deut. 23:12 f.

Deut. 14:18 Lev. 11:19

That the doctrines of men are to be rejected: proof from the Scriptures.

I

Deut. 4:2 Moses in Deuteronomy iv, 2 says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it."

But some one will say that Moses speaks only of his word; but to the books of Moses there have also been added many books of the prophets and the entire New Testament. I answer: True; but nothing new has been added: the same things that are found in the books of Moses are found in the others. For the other books do no more than show how in the course of history the word of Moses was kept or not kept. It is indeed stated in different words and the histories are different, but thoughout there is one and the same teaching. And here we can challenge them to point out anywhere in all the books added to the books of Moses a single word that is not found earlier in the books of Moses. For it is beyond question that all the Scriptures point to Christ alone. Now Christ says, in John 5:46 John v, 46, "Moses wrote of me." Therefore everything that is in the other books is also in the books of Moses, and these are the original documents.

II

Isa. 29:13 Matt. 15:8 Isaiah xxix, 13, which the Lord quotes in Matthew xv, 8: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching the doctrines and commandments of men."

Mark the word of Christ, Who calls it vain worship to serve God after the doctrines of men. For Christ is not Gal. 1: 8 drunken or a fool; on His word we must build in all things rather than on all angels and creatures.

III

The same Christ in the same chapter, Matthew xv, 11, says, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." Matt. 15:11

This saying must be well understood, for it is powerful and mightily overthrows all teaching, custom and manner of life that distinguishes between foods, and it sets all consciences free from all laws concerning food and drink; so that it is allowable to eat milk, butter, eggs, cheese and meat every day, whether it be Sunday or Friday, Lent or Advent; and no one needs to pay butter-money or buy butter-letters. For this word stands firm and does not deceive: "That which goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man."

Fast-days

From this it follows, first, that it is a lie when they say that St. Peter instituted the fast-days and that the commandment of the Church has made it a mortal sin to eat eggs, butter, milk and meat on fast-days. For neither St. Peter nor the Church institutes or teaches anything contrary to Christ. And if they did, we must not obey them. To do what they ask would indeed not be wicked; but it is wicked to make a necessity and a commandment of that which is free, and to pretend that something does defile and is sin of which Christ Himself says that it is no sin and does not defile.

Dispensations

It follows, secondly, that it is sheer devil's knavery for the pope to sell letters and grant permission to eat butter, meat, etc.; for Christ in this word has already made it a matter of liberty and has permitted it.

Special Fast-days

In the third place, it is an error and a lie to say that goldfasts,[1] banfasts,[2] and the fasts on the eve of Apostles'

[1] Goldfasts are the ember-fasts, on the three ember-days of each of the four seasons of the year; possibly called "goldfasts" because on these days rents were collected. See Realencyklopädie, 5 : 780, 9.

[2] The fasts enjoined upon a people by a public edict or ban. The term "ban" as here used does not denote the Church's excommunication, but an authoritative proclamation.

and saints' days must be observed and that their non-observance is sin, because the Church has so commanded. For against everything of the kind stands this word of Christ: "That which goeth into the mouth doth not defile the man." Fasting should be free and voluntary, both as to the day and as to the food, forever.

The Orders

Fourthly, the orders of St. Benedict, and of St. Bernard, the Carthusians, and all others which avoid the use of meat and other food because they hold that this is necessary and commanded and that not to do so would be sin, contradict Christ. For their law flatly contradicts the word of Christ and says: That which goeth into the mouth defileth. Then they must make Christ a liar when He says: "That which goeth into the mouth defileth not the man." Thus you see that this one saying of Christ mightily condemns all orders and spiritual rules. For if that which goeth into the mouth does not defile, how much less will that defile which is put on the body? whether it be cowl, coat, shirt, hose, shoes, cloak, whether green, yellow, blue, red, white, motley, or whatever one wish. And the same is true of places, whether churches, cells or the rooms of a house.

It follows that he who regards it a sin for a monk to go without the dress of his order, and would not leave it a matter of freedom, also makes Christ a liar and makes that a sin which Christ freed from sin, and says Yes! where Christ says No! What then are such monks but people who say to Christ's very face, Thou liest! there is sin in that which thou sayest is not sin. It will not help them to quote St. Bernard, St. Gregory, St. Francis and other saints. We must hear what Christ says, Who alone has been made our Teacher by the Father, when on Mount Tabor He said, Matthew xvii, 5, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." He did not say, Hear ye St. Bernard, St. Gregory, etc., but, Hear ye Him, Him, Him, my beloved Son. Who knows how far the saints sinned or did right in this matter? What they did, they

Matt. 17:5

did not of necessity nor by commandment. Or if they did it as of necessity and by commandment, they erred, and we must not forsake Christ to follow them.

All this is confirmed by Christ in the words which follow in Matthew xv, 11, "That which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. For out of the mouth, coming forth from the heart, come evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, etc. These defile a man." Here we ask, If that alone is sin and defiles a man, which proceeds from the heart, as Christ here so strongly argues and decides, how then can butter, milk, eggs, cheese defile, which proceed not from the mouth nor from the heart, but come from the bellies of cows and of hens? Who has ever seen meat, tonsures, cowls, monasteries, hair-shirts coming out of men's mouths? Then it must be the cows that sin in giving us milk and butter, and in bearing calves. Matt. 15:11

Therefore, all the laws of monks and of men concerning food, clothing and places and all things that are external, are not only blasphemy of God and lying and deceiving, but the buffoonery of apes. It is true, a man may have an inordinate desire to eat excessively and to dress extravagantly; but that proceeds from the heart, and may refer to fish as well as to meat, to gray homespun as well as to red velvet. In short, Christ does not lie when He says, "That which goeth into the mouth defileth not a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

But if it is true that neglect to do what men command neither defiles nor is sin, then on the other hand, the keeping and doing of men's commandments cannot make us clean nor give us merit; since only the opposite of sin and of the unclean is clean and gives merit. Therefore, all of the monastic life neither makes clean nor gives merit. And that is what the Lord Christ means when He says, Matthew xv, 9, "In vain do they worship me with the commandments of men." Why 'in vain'? Because neglecting them is no sin and keeping them is no merit, but both are free. They Matt. 15:9

deceive themselves, therefore, and make a merit of that which is no merit, and are afraid of sinning where there is
Ps. 14:5 no sin, as Psalm xiv, 5, says, "There have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear."

IV

1 Tim. 4:1–7 St. Paul in I Timothy iv, 1–7 says: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables."

O how this thunders and storms against all the works, doctrines and orders of men. First, if they boast that they have derived their practice from the pope and from holy fathers, what will Christ's judgment be? Will He not say, "Paul, My Apostle, is My chosen vessel, as Luke
Acts 9:15 writes, Acts ix, 15: why then have you not ascribed greater authority to his word than to that of the pope and the fathers, of whom you do not know whose vessels they are?" How will they stand before Him?

Next, we ask them whether butter, eggs, meat, milk and all the food which they avoid on fast-days and in the orders, have not been created by God, and are not God's good creatures? Then it is certain that they are the men of whom Paul here says that they forbid the food which

God has created and has given to believers to use. And they also forbid marriage, so that they cannot escape: this passage fits them and is spoken of them. Let us see what Paul thinks of them and how he reproves them.

Departed from the Faith

I. They have departed from the faith; for they could not have introduced such doctrines and works if they had not thought the doctrines and works would make them pious and save them. But such an opinion is of itself a sure sign that they have fallen away from the faith, since it is the work of faith alone to do that which they expect works to do, as has frequently been said.

Give Heed to Seducing Spirits

II. They give heed to seducing spirits. He does not say, "to seducing men," but "to seducing spirits"; and these are they who pretend to be spiritual and bear the name spiritual, and claim to be of the Spirit and in the Spirit. But since they are without faith it is impossible for them not to err in spiritual matters. Hence this is a fitting succession: they depart from the faith and follow after error in the spirit.

Doctrines of Devils

III. Their doctrines he calls "doctrines of devils." This also must follow where faith and the true Spirit are wanting: the devil gives them the seducing spirit and leads them on with beautifully varnished doctrines and works, so that they think they are altogether spiritual. But since the doctrine does not originate in the Scriptures, it can be the doctrine of no one but the devil.

Speakers of Lies

IV. They are speakers of lies. For they at times quote even the Scriptures and the sayings of the fathers and wrest them to support their doctrines, as we see them do daily. But this is all false and a lie, since the Scriptures are altogether against them.

Hypocrisy

V. It is sheer hypocrisy. This is true and needs no comment. For all that they do is only appearance and show, concerned with external matters of food and clothes.

Seared Conscience

VI. They have their conscience seared with a hot iron; that is, they have an unnatural conscience. For where there is no sin nor matter of conscience, they make sin and

a matter of conscience, as was said above. Just as a scar caused by searing is an unnatural mark on the body.

Forbid to Marry

VII. They forbid to marry, by creating an estate in which there shall be no marriage, as we see in the case of both priests and monks. Wherefore, behold the judgment of God upon such doctrines and estates: that they are doctrines of devils, seducing doctrines, false doctrines, faithless doctrines, hypocritical doctrines. God help us! Who would remain in them when God Himself passes such judgment? What would it help you, if you had made a thousand vows and oaths on such doctrines? Nay, the stricter the vow, the more reason to break it, because it was made after the devil's doctrines and against God.

The Tatianists

But see how cleverly they worm themselves out and ward off this text from themselves, saying that it does not apply to them, but to the Tatianists,[1] the heretics who condemned marriage altogether. Paul, however, does not speak here of those who condemn marriage, but of those who forbid it for the sake of appearing spiritual. Let us grant, however, that Paul speaks against the Tatianists. Then, if the pope does what the Tatianists did, why does it not apply to him as well? Be they Tatianists or the pope, this text speaks of those who forbid marriage. The words of Paul condemn the work, and make no distinction about the person who does it. He who forbids marriage is the devil's disciple and apostle, as the words clearly say. And since the pope does this, he must be the devil's disciple, as must all his followers; otherwise, St. Paul must be a liar.

Forbid Food

VIII. They forbid the food which God has created. Here, again, you see that the doctrines of man are ascribed

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[1] The Tatianists, followers of Tatian, who lived in Syria in the middle of the second century. Tatian, apparently basing his view of marriage upon I Cor. 7:5, ascribes the institution of marriage and the whole Old Testament Law to the devil. Eusebius held that Tatian was the founder of a sect known as the Encratites, or Abstainers. Modern historians see in the Encratites groups of ascetic Christians found frequently in the early Church, somewhat similar to the later monks and nuns, so that Harnack can write that Tatian "joined the Encratites." Dogmengeschichte[3], I, 227 n. See Realencyklopädie[3], 19, 386–394 on Tatian; 5, 392 f. on the Encratites.

to the devil by God Himself through the mouth of Paul. What greater and more terrible thing would you wish to hear concerning the doctrines of men, than that they are a falling away from the faith, seducing, false, devilish, hypocritical? What will satisfy those whom this text does not satisfy? But if the doctrine that forbids certain kinds of food is devilish and unchristian, that which concerns clothes, tonsures, places and everything external will be just as devilish and unchristian.

The Manicheans

But here again they worm themselves out, and say that St. Paul is speaking of the Manicheans.[1] We are not asking about that. St. Paul speaks of the forbidding of meats, and, be they Manicheans or Tatianists, the pope and his followers forbid meats. Paul speaks of the work which we see that the pope does. Therefore we cannot save him from this text. If some other man arose today or tomorrow and forbade meats, would it not apply to him, even if he were no Manichean? If that way of interpreting Scripture were true, we might boldly do what Paul here forbids, and say, It does not apply to us, but to the ancient Manicheans. But that is not the way. Whether the pope with his monks and priests be not a Manichean, I do not discuss; but I do say, that in his teaching and works he contradicts the teaching of St. Paul more than any Manichean.

Unthankful

IX. They are unthankful. For God has created meats, says St. Paul, to be received with thanksgiving. And they refuse to receive them, that they may have no occasion to be thankful for God's goodness. The reason for which is, that they have no faith and do not know the truth. For Paul says, I Tim. iv, 3, "To them which believe 1 Tim. 4:3

[1] The Manicheans, strictly speaking not a Christian sect, but a rival religious community, which made inroads upon the Christian Church. Founded by the Babylonian Mani, who was born in the third century, they taught the inherent evil of all matter, and consequently had many fasts, averaging seven days in each month, while the "perfect" among them abstained from meat, wine and marriage. See Realencyklopädie³, 12, 193–228; von Orelli, Religionsgeschichte, 279–291.

and to them which know the truth, they are given to be used with thanksgiving." But if they are unbelieving and do not know the truth, as St. Paul here says they are, they are beyond question heathen, non-Christians, blind and foolish. And this, I suppose, they regard as praise of the pope, priests and monks!

Harmful Preachers

X. Paul rebukes them as wicked, harmful preachers; for he says that Timothy shall be a good preacher, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, if he will put the brethren in remembrance of these things. It follows that they who teach the contrary must be wicked preachers and be nourished with words of unbelief and of wicked doctrines.

Old Wives' Fables

XI. He calls such doctrines profane and old wives' fables. Is not that foolish talk? He says that the great doctors busy themselves with fables such as old wives chatter about behind the stove, and calls them profane, unchristian and unholy idle talk, although the doctors claim that they are the very essence of holiness!

Who has ever heard the doctrines of men so terribly decried in every way? that they are apostate, unbelieving, unchristian, heathen, seducing, devilish, false, hypocritical, searing the conscience, unthankful, that they dishonor God and His creature and are harmful fables and old wives' chatter. Let him who can, flee from beneath this judgment of God.

V

Col. 2:16 ff.

St. Paul in Colossians ii, 16 and the following verses says: "Let no man burden you in meat or in drink or in respect of certain days which are holy days, or days of the new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is in Christ. Let no one seduce you who follows his own will in the humility and religion of angels, of whom he has never seen even one, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and does not hold fast the Head,

from which all the body, by joints and bands, is supplied with nourishment and is knit together, and so groweth unto a stature given of God. If then you be dead with Christ from the elements of this world, why do you burden yourselves with ordinances as if you were alive? Ordinances which say, This thou shalt not touch, this thou shalt not eat or drink, this thou shalt not put on (which all perish in the using), according to the commandments and doctrines of men, who have a show of wisdom because of their self-chosen spirituality and humility, and because they do not spare the body and do not supply its needs."

Is St. Paul here also speaking of the Manicheans or Tatianists? Or can we find excuse here for the papists? He speaks against those who take captive the consciences of men with the doctrines of men and make matters of conscience of food, drink, clothes, days and everything that is external. And it cannot be denied that the pope, the chapters and monasteries with their rules and statutes do this when they forbid the eating of meat, eggs and butter, and the wearing of ordinary clothes such as other people wear. And here stands St. Paul, and says:

Burden the Conscience

I. "Let no man burden your consciences, or judge or condemn you in respect of food, drink, clothes or days." What does this mean if not this: Be not priests nor monks, nor in any way keep the pope's laws; and believe him not when he says that a certain thing is sin or a matter of conscience. See, here God through Paul commands us to despise the laws of the pope and of the monasteries, and to keep them free, so that they do not take captive the conscience. That is as much as to say, Do not become monks or priests, and let him who has become monk or priest turn back, or else retain his position as a matter of freedom without constraint of conscience.

And although Paul wrote this of the Jews, who did such things according to the Law (for he says in Colossians ii, 17, that they have the shadow and type of things to come, but that the body itself is in Christ), yet it holds much more

Col. 2:17

against the decrees of the pope and of the monks. For if that which God has decreed comes to an end and shall no longer bind the consciences of men, how much more shall men neither decree nor keep anything that would bind the conscience? And farther on more will be said of the laws of mere men, for

By-paths

II. He says, "Let no one seduce you or lead you toward the prize in by-paths." What does this mean but to lead men to works and away from faith, which alone is the one right road by which to gain the prize of salvation, to strive toward heaven by other ways, and to claim that this is the way to gain the prize? And this is what the orders and the pope's doctrines do. And what are the ways they propose? Listen:

Humility

III. He says, "In self-willed humility and the religion of angels." What words could better fit the orders? Is it not true that the pope and all of them prattle much of their obedience, which is said to be the noblest virtue, that is, the precious spiritual humility of the papists? But who has commanded this humility? They themselves have invented it and sought it out that they might seduce themselves. For with it they have withdrawn themselves from the common humility and obedience which God has commanded, namely, that every one shall humble himself and be subject to his neighbor. But they are subject to no man on earth, and have withdrawn themselves entirely; they have made an obedience and a humility of their own after their statutes. Yet they claim that their obedience is superhuman, perfect and, as it were, angelic, although there are no more disobedient and less humble people on earth than they are.

In the same way they also have their vows of chastity and poverty. They do not work like other people but, like the angels in heaven, they praise and worship God day and night; in short, their life is heavenly, although nowhere on earth can you find more horrible unchastity, greater wealth, less devotional hearts, or more hardened people than in the

spiritual estate, as every one knows. Yet they seduce all the world from the true way to the by-path with their self-willed, beautiful, spiritual and angelic life. All this, it seems to me, is not spoken of the Jews nor of the Manicheans, but of the papists; the works prove it.

Uncertainty

IV. He says, "He walks in such religion and in that which he has never seen." This is the very worst feature of the doctrines of men and the life built upon them, that they are without foundation and without warrant in the Scriptures, and that men cannot know whether what they do is good or wicked. For all their life is an uncertain venture. If you ask them whether they are certain that what they are and do is pleasing to God, they say, they do not know, they must take the chances: "the end will show us." And this is all they can say, for they have no faith, and faith alone makes us certain that all that we are is well-pleasing to God, not because of our merit, but because of His mercy. Thus all their humility, obedience and all of their religion is, at the very best, uncertain and in vain.

Vainly Puffed Up

V. "Vainly they puff themselves up," that is, they have no reason to do so. For although their practices are uncertain, unbelieving and altogether damnable, yet they make bold to puff themselves up and to claim that they have the best and the only true way, so that in comparison with theirs every other manner of living stinks and is nothing at all. But this puffed-up carnal mind of theirs they neither see nor feel, so great is their angelic humility and obedience! O, the fruit of the doctrines of men!

Against Christ

VI. "They do not hold fast the Head," which is Christ. For the doctrines of men and Christ cannot agree; one must destroy the other. If the conscience finds comfort in Christ, the comfort derived from works and doctrines must fall; if it finds comfort in works, Christ must fall. The heart cannot build upon a twofold foundation; one must be forsaken. Now we see that all the comfort of the papists rests upon their practices; for if it did not rest upon them, they would not esteem them and would give them up, or else they

would use them as matters of freedom, how and when they pleased.

If there were no other misfortune connected with the doctrines of men, this were of itself all too great—that for their sake Christ must be forsaken, the Head must be lost, and the heart must build on such an abomination. For this reason St. Peter calls the orders abominable and damnable heresies,
2 Pet. 2:1 which deny Christ, when he says, in the Second Epistle, ii, 1, "There shall arise among you false teachers, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, and deny the Lord that bought them."

Why Burden the Conscience?

VII. It is clear enough that he means our spiritual estate when he says, "If ye be dead with Christ, why do ye burden your consciences with ordinances, such as: This thou shalt not touch, this thou shalt not eat, this thou shalt not wear, etc." Who can here deny that God through St. Paul forbids us to teach and to hear all doctrines of men, in so far as they constrain the conscience? Who then can with a good conscience be a monk or a priest, or be subject to the pope? They must confess that their consciences are taken captive with such laws. Thus thou seest what a mighty saying this is against all doctrines of men. It is dreadful to hear that they forsake Christ the Head, deny the faith and so must needs become heathen, and yet think their holiness upholds the world.

VI.

Gal. 1:8 f. Paul, in Galatians 1, 8f., says: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.[1] As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

[1] The Greek anathema Luther here translates ein Bann, "let him be a ban." This explains the reference to the ban below.

In these words you hear a judgment of God against the pope and all doctrines of men, which says that they are under the ban. And this ban is not like the pope's ban; it is eternal and separates a man from God, from Christ, from all salvation and from everything that is good, and makes him the companion of devils. O what a terrible judgment is this! Look now, whether the pope, priests and monks do not proclaim another and a different doctrine than that taught by Christ and His Apostles. We said above that Christ teaches, "What goeth into the mouth doth not defile a man." Contrary to this and beyond it the pope, priests and monks say, "Thou liest, Christ, in so saying; for the eating of meat defiles a Carthusian and condemns him; and the same is true of the other orders." Is not this striking Christ on the mouth, calling Him a liar and blaspheming Him, and teaching other doctrines than He taught? Therefore it is a just judgment, that they in their great holiness are condemned like blasphemers of God with an eternal ban. **God's Ban**

VII

Paul, in Titus i, 14, says: "Teach them not to give heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn them from the truth." **Titus 1:14**

This is a strong command, that we are not at all to regard the commandments of men. Is not this clear enough? And Paul gives his reason: they turn men from the truth, he says. For as has been said above, the heart cannot trust in Christ and at the same time in the doctrines or the works of men. Therefore, as soon as a man turns to the doctrines of men he turns away from the truth, and does not regard it. On the other hand, he who finds his comfort in Christ cannot regard the commandments and the works of men. Look now, whose ban you should fear most! The pope and his followers cast you far beyond hell if you do not heed **Christ, or Men?**

their commandments, and Christ commands you not to heed them on pain of His ban. Consider whom you wish to obey.

VIII

2 Pet. 2:1–3

II Peter ii, 1–3: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."

The Orders Damnable Heresies

So then, the orders and monastic houses are damnable heresies. Why? Because they deny Christ, and blaspheme the way of faith. How? Christ says, there is no sin and no righteousness in eating, drinking, clothes, places and works of men; this they condemn, and teach and live the opposite, namely, that sin and righteousness are in these things. Hence Christ must be a liar, He must be denied and blasphemed together with His teaching and faith. And they make use of feigned words, and make much of their obedience, chastity and worship; but only through covetousness, that they may make merchandise of us, until they have brought all the wealth of the world into their possession, on the ground that they are the people who by their worship would help every man to heaven. For this reason they are and remain damnable and blasphemous heresies.

IX

Matt. 24:23 ff

Christ says, in Matthew xxiv, 23 ff.: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold,

I have told you before, Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

Tell me, how can a monk be saved? He binds his salvation to a place and says, "Here I find Christ; if I did not remain here, I should be lost." But Christ says, "No, I am not here." Who will reconcile these two? Therefore, it is clear from this word of Christ that all doctrines which bind the conscience to places are contrary to Christ. And if He does not allow the conscience to be bound to places, neither does He allow it to be bound to meats, clothes, postures or anything that is external. There is no doubt then that this passage speaks of the pope and his clergy, and that Christ Himself releases and sets free all priests and monks, in that He condemns all orders and monasteries and says, "Believe not, go not out," etc.

He says the same thing also in Luke xvii, 20 f.: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, and men shall not say, Lo here! or, Lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20 f.

Is not this also clear enough? The doctrines of men can command nothing but external things; and since the kingdom of God is not external, both teachers and disciples must needs miss the kingdom and go astray. Nor will it help them to say that the holy fathers instituted the orders. For Christ has already destroyed this argument, since He says, that the very elect might be misled, that is, they will err, but not remain in their error. How else would it be an exceeding great error, if the elect were not misled? Let the teaching and the practice of the saints be what it will, the words of Christ are certain and clear. Him we must follow, and not the saints, whose teaching and works are uncertain. What He says stands firm, "The kingdom of God is among[1] you, and not at a distance, either here or there."

[1] Stehet unter euch, whereas above Luther writes ist inwendig in euch.

X

Prov. 30:5 f. Solomon, in Proverbs xxx, 5 f., says: "Every word of God is purified: and is a shield unto all them that put their trust in it. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

With this I will end for the present; for there is much more in the prophets, especially in Jeremiah, of which I have written in the treatise on Confession. Here then Solomon concludes that he is a liar who adds aught to the words of God; for the Word of God alone is to teach us, as Christ says, Matthew xxiii, 8, "Be ye not called masters. One Master is in you, even Christ." Amen.

Matt. 23:8

A REPLY TO TEXTS QUOTED IN DEFENSE OF THE DOCTRINES OF MEN

Luke 10:16 Matt. 10:40 John 13:20 The first is Luke x, 16, where Christ says, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." He spoke similar words in Matthew x, 40, and in John xiii, 20. Here, they claim, Christ demands of us that we accept their man-made laws.

The Command of Christ Luke 10:0 Matt. 10:7 I reply: That is not true. For immediately before speaking these words, Christ says, "Go and say, the kingdom of God is at hand." With these words Christ stops the mouths of all the teachers of the doctrines of men, and commands the apostles what they are to teach, and Himself puts the words in their mouth, saying that they shall preach the kingdom of God. Now he who does not preach the kingdom of God is not sent by Christ, and him these words do not concern. Much rather do these words demand of us that we hear not the doctrines of men. Now to preach of the kingdom of God is nothing else than to preach the Gospel, in which the faith of Christ is taught,

by which alone God dwells and rules in us. But the doctrines of men do not preach about faith, but about eating, clothing, times, places, persons and about purely external things which do not profit the soul.

The Perversion of the Text

Behold how honestly the pious shepherds and faithful teachers have dealt with the poor common people. This text, "Who hears you, hears me," they have in a masterly fashion torn out of its context and have terrified us with it, until they have made us subject to themselves. But what precedes, "Preach the kingdom of God," they have taken good care not to mention, and have bravely leaped over it, that they might by no means be compelled to preach nothing but the Gospel. The noble, and most excellent teachers! We ought to thank them for it!

Mark 16:15

In Mark, the last chapter, we read that He sent out the disciples to preach. Let us hear what command He gives them, and how He sets a limit to their teaching and bridles their tongues, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, shall be saved," etc., Mark xvi, 15. He does not say, Go and preach what you will, or what you think to be good; but He puts His own word into their mouth, and bids them preach the Gospel.

Matt. 28:19 f.

In Matthew, the last chapter, He says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptise them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; and teach them to observe all things which I have commanded you." Here, again, He does not say, Teach them to observe what you devise, but what I have commanded you. Therefore the pope and his bishops and teachers must be wolves and the apostles of the devil; it cannot be otherwise, for they teach not the commands of Christ, but their own words.

Matt. 25:15

So also in Matthew xxv, 15, in the parable of the three servants, the Lord points out that the householder bade the servants trade not with their own property, but with his, and gave the first five talents, the second two and the third one.

Our second text is Matthew xxiii, 2 f., where the Lord says, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."

Here, here, they say, we have authority to teach what we think to be right.

Moses' Seat

I answer: If that is what Christ means, then we are in a sorry plight. Every pope might then create more new laws, until the world could no longer contain all the laws. But they quote this text as they quote the first. What do the words "sit in Moses' seat" mean? Let us ask, what did Moses teach? And if he still sat in his seat today, what would he teach? Beyond a doubt, nothing but what he taught of old, namely, the commandments and the word of God. He never yet spoke the doctrines of men, but what God commanded him to speak, as almost every chapter of his shows. It follows, then, that he who teaches something else than Moses teaches, does not sit in Moses' seat. For the Lord calls it Moses' seat, because from it the doctrines of Moses should be read and taught. The same meaning is contained in the words which follow, in which the Lord says, "But do not ye after their works, for they say, and do not; for they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

Matt. 23:3 f.

See, here He reproves their works, because they add many laws to the doctrines of Moses and lay them on the people, but themselves do not touch them. And afterward He says, in verse 13, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind; for whether is greater? the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?" Is it not clear that Christ here condemns their doctrines of men? He can, therefore, not have confirmed them by speaking of sitting in Moses' seat; else He would have contradicted Himself. Therefore Moses' seat must

Matt. 23:13, 16 f.

mean no more than the Law of Moses, and the sitting in it no more than the preaching of the Law of Moses.

This is what Moses himself said of his seat and doctrine, Deuteronomy iv, 2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you." And in Deuteronomy xii, 32, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it." These doctrines they were required to teach in Moses' seat; therefore Moses' seat cannot endure any doctrines of men. Deut. 4:2 Deut. 12:32

St. Augustine is quoted as having written in the Book against the Letter of the Manicheans,[1] "I would not believe the Gospel if I did not believe the Church." St. Augustine

Here you see, they say, we are to believe the Church more than the Gospel.

I answer: Even if Augustine had used those words, who gave him authority, that we must believe what he says? What Scripture does he quote to prove the statement? What if he erred here, as we know that he frequently did, as did all the fathers? Should one single sentence of Augustine be so mighty as to refute all the texts quoted above? That is not what God wills; St. Augustine must yield to them. Authority

Further, if that were St. Augustine's meaning, he would contradict himself; for in very many places he exalts the Holy Scriptures above the opinions of all teachers, above the decrees of all councils and churches, and will have men judge of him and of the teachings of all men according to the Scriptures. Why then do the faithful shepherds pass by those sayings of St. Augustine, plain and clear as they are, and light on this lonely one, which is so obscure and sounds Consistency

[1] Contra Epistolam Manichaei, vi, Paris Ed., 1839, 28: 185: Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me ecclesiae catholicae commoveret anctoritas. On the preceding page Augustine had written: "If the claim of truth be shown to be so evident that it cannot be called into question, it is to be preferred before all those things by which I am held in the Catholic faith."

so unlike Augustine as we know him from all his writings? It can only be because they want to bolster up their tyranny with idle, empty words.

Words Perverted

Furthermore, they are deceivers, in that they not only ascribe to St. Augustine an opinion he did not hold, but they also falsify and pervert his words. For St. Augustine's words really are, "I would not have believed the Gospel if the authority of the whole Church had not moved me." Augustine speaks of the whole Church, and says that throughout the world it with one consent preaches the Gospel and not the Letter of the Manicheans; and this unanimous authority of the Church moves him to consider it the true Gospel. But our tyrants apply this name of the Church to themselves, as if the laymen and the common people were not also Christians. And what they teach they want men to consider as the teaching of the Christian Church, although they are a minority, and we, who are universal Christendom, should also be consulted about what is to be taught in the name of universal Christendom. See, so cleverly do they quote the words of St. Augustine: what he says of the Church throughout all the world, they would have us understand of the Roman See.

But how does it follow from this saying that the doctrines of men are also to be observed? What doctrine of men has ever been devised that has been accepted and preached by all of the universal Church throughout the world? Not one; the Gospel alone is accepted by all Christians everywhere.

Their True Meaning

But then we must not understand St. Augustine to say that he would not believe the Gospel unless he were moved thereto by the authority of the whole Church. For that were false and unchristian. Every man must believe only because it is God's Word, and because he is convinced in his heart that it is true, although an angel from heaven and all the world preached the contrary. His meaning is rather, as he himself says, that he finds the Gospel nowhere except in the Church, and that this external proof can be

given heretics that their doctrine is not right, but that that is right which all the world has with one accord accepted. For the eunuch in Acts viii, 37, believed on the Gospel as preached by Philip, although he did not know whether many or few believed on it. So also Abraham believed the promise of God all by himself, when no man knew of it, Romans iv, 18. And Mary, Luke i, 38, believed the message of Gabriel by herself, and there was no one on earth who believed with her. In this way Augustine also had to believe, and all the saints, and we too, every one for himself alone.

Acts 8:37

Rom. 4:18

Luke 1:38

For this reason St. Augustine's words cannot bear the interpretation they put upon them; but they must be understood of the external proof of faith, by which heretics are refuted and the weak strengthened in faith, when they see that all the world preaches and regards as Gospel that which they believe. And if this meaning cannot be found in St. Augustine's words, it is better to reject the words; for they are contrary to the Scriptures and to all experience if they have that other meaning.

The Apostles Also Men

Finally, when they are refuted with Scripture so that they cannot escape, they begin to blaspheme God and say, "But St. Matthew, Paul and Peter also were men; therefore what they teach is also the doctrine of men. And if their doctrine is to be observed, let the pope's doctrine be observed as well!" Such blasphemy is now being uttered even by some princes and bishops, who count themselves wise. When you hear such utterly hardened and blinded blasphemers, turn away from them or stop your ears; they are not worthy that one should talk with them. If that argument were to hold, then Moses also was a man, and all the prophets were men. Then let us go our way, and believe nothing at all, but regard everything as the doctrine of men, and follow our fancy.

Answer

But if you will talk with them, do so, and say, Well, let St. Paul or Matthew be the doctrine of men; then we ask,

Whence comes their authority? How will they prove that they have authority to teach and to be bishops? Or how shall we know where the Church is? If they say that St. Matthew has so asserted in Matthew xvi, 19, or St. Paul in some place or other, do you say, But that does not hold: they are the doctrines of men, as you say; you must have God's Word to confirm you. And then you will find that these hardened blasphemers put themselves to shame and confusion with their own folly. They cannot even distinguish between a man who speaks for himself and one through whom God speaks. The words of the Apostles were commanded them by God, and confirmed and proved by great miracles, such as were never done for the doctrines of men. And if they are certain in themselves, and will prove it to us, that God has commanded them to teach as they do, we will believe them as we believe the Apostles. If it is uncertain whether the words of the Apostles are of God, who will give us certainty that their doctrines of men are of God? O furor et amentia his saeculis digna![1]

Matt. 16:19

Why Doctrines of Men Are Condemned

But we do not condemn the doctrines of men because they are the doctrines of men, for we would gladly endure them, but because they are contrary to the Gospel and to the Scriptures. The Scriptures set the consciences of men free, and forbid that they be taken captive with the doctrines of men. The doctrines of men take captive the conscience. This conflict between the Scriptures and the doctrines of men we cannot reconcile. Hence, because these two forms of doctrine contradict one another, we allow even young children to judge here whether we are to give up the Scriptures, in which the one Word of God is taught from the beginning of the world, or the doctrines of men which were newly devised yesterday and change daily? And we hope that every one will agree in the decision that the doctrines of men must be forsaken and the Scriptures retained.

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[1] O raging madness, worthy of our age!

For they cannot be reconciled, but are by nature opposed to one another, like fire and water, like heaven and earth; As Isaiah lv, 8 f. says: "As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." Now he who walks on the earth cannot at the same time walk in heaven, and he who walks in heaven cannot walk on the earth. Isa. 55:8 f.

Therefore we request the papists that they first reconcile their doctrines with the Scriptures. If they accomplish that, we will observe their doctrines. But that they will not do before the Holy Spirit has become a liar. Therefore we say again, The doctrines of men we censure not because they are spoken by men, but because they are lies and blasphemies against the Scriptures. And the Scriptures, although they also were written by men, are not of men nor from men, but from God. Now since Scriptures and the doctrines of men are contrary the one to the other, one must lie and the other be true. Let us see to which of the two they themselves will ascribe the lie. Let this suffice.

INDEX

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

INDEX

Abel, 227
Abraham, 76, 198, 203, 209, 227
Absolution, 67, 187, 255, 290, 424, 252, 292
  power of, 106, 124
Abuses, 80ff.
Accident and substance, 188, 191
Adam, 198, 330
Adjutories, 100
Administratio, 93
Adversity, 12, 16, 44
Agnes, St., 118, 152
Agricola, 351
Agriculture, 161
Ahasuerus, 20
Ahaz, 203, 227
d'Ailly, 188, 190
Albrecht of Brandenburg, 88, 93
Alexander of Hales, 225
Alexander VI., 98, 111
Alien sins, 364
Allegories, 276
Alveld, 57, 166, 171, 182
Ambrose, 68, 158
Amen, meaning of, 374, 384
Amerbach, Boniface, 177
Amsdorf, 57, 59, 61, 399
Angelic Sum, 261
Angels, 13
Angelus de Clavissio, 261
Annas, 49
Annates, 84ff., 99, 104
Anne, St., 27
Anniversaries, 194, 209
Annuities, 159
Anthony, St., 135
Antichrist, 73, 79, 81, 90, 95, 102, 108, 138, 140, 235f., 247, 268, 304, 346
Antonius of Florence, 132
Antwerp, 95
Apostles, 103
Apostolic Council, 77
Aquinas, Thomas, 144, 147, 188, 226, 236
Archbishop, 101
Aristotle, 146, 175, 188, 190ff.
Articles of faith, 188, 273
Attrition, 248
Augsburg, Diet of, 161
Augustine, St., 10, 15, 68, 116, 178, 204, 236, 266, 274, 364, 400, 451ff.
Augustinian fathers, 308
Augustinus Triumphus, 73, 81
Aurifaber, 390
Avarice, 89, 91f., 94, 97f., 100, 114, 118, 120, 126, 132f., 137, 148, 219, 245, 249, 290, 383

Babylon, 50, 83, 139, 156, 171, 235, 247, 252
Babylonian captivity, 9, 207, 209, 236, 387
Balaam, 154
Balaam's ass, 76
Bamberg, 82
Ban, 10, 33ff., 38, 40, 101, 105, 124, 126, 143, 433, 444
  power of, 37, 47
  greater and lesser, 38, 54
  purpose of, 39
  penalty of, 40

Ban, danger of, 41, 43
harms no one, 42
a medicine, 43
to be respected, 44
to be loved, 47
unjust, to be desired, 52, 80
for debt, 53
abuses of, 53
does not exclude from Gospel, 54
Banfasts, 433
Baptism, 9f., 14, 25f., 72, 115, 118, 133, 138, 168, 177, 181, 203, 218ff., 245ff., 257, 285, 290, 292
grace of, 67, 134
makes priests, 68
foundation of sacraments, 221
a ship, 222f.
God's work, 224
formula of, 224f.
by wicked minister, 225
efficacy of, 228, 231f.
significance of, 230
vows of, 238
comfort of, 424f.
Bar to grace, 227, 229, 237
Barbara, St., 127
Barnabas, 112
Basel, Council of, 63, 84, 86, 140, 186
Beer-money, 27
Begging, 115, 134
Belief and faith, 368
Belvidere, 98
Benedict, St., 434
Benefit of clergy, 70
Berlepsch, Hans von, 429
Bernard, St., 240, 298, 305, 311, 434
Bethaven, 252, 280
Biel, Gabriel, 402
Bigamy, 271, 280f.
Birettas, 151
Bishops, 86, 100f., 119, 130, 256, 330
Bishops' paths, 107
Blandina, St., 222
Blasphemy, 184
Bohemians, 140, 179, 182, 184, 186f.
Bonaventure, 276
Boniface VIII., 114, 148
Both kinds in the sacrament, 143, 171, 414
Botschaften, 135
Brandenburg, 36
Bread, Sacrament of the Altar, 177ff., 245, 292
daily, is Christ, 380
Breves, 106
Brotherhood, Christian, 253, 279
Brotherhoods, 8, 26ff., 194
perversion of, 28
kinds of, 29
proper conduct of, 30
Bull, Cœna Domini, 105, 250
papal, 8, 47, 58, 98, 122, 133f., 241, 253, 293, 298
Burer, Albrecht, 389
Butter-letters, 98, 128, 137, 433

Cæsarini, Cardinal, 139
Caiaphas, 49
Cairo, 95
Cajetan, 172, 174, 306
Cambray, Cardinal of, 188, v. d'Ailly.
Campoflore, 98
Canaan, 199
Canon law, 67, 71, 74, 84, 90, 92, 99ff., 107f., 120, 122f., 129f., 137, 144, 148
Canon of the mass, 211, 213, 215
Canonical hours, 278, 281
Canonization, 131
Canonry, 86, 137
Captivity of the Church, 176f., 242, v. Babylonian Captivity.
Cardinals, 81ff.
Carlstadt, 307, 387f., 395, 402
Carmelites, 27
Carthusians, 403, 434, 445

Castor and Pollux, 405f.
Casus reservati, 105, v. Reserved cases.
Catechisms, 21, 351
Cathedrals, 136
Celibacy, 280, v. Vows.
Ceremonialist, 345
Ceremonies, 195, 202, 212, 228, 251, 254, 275, 277ff., 282, 288f., 343, 346f.
Certainty of salvation, 443
Chancery, rules in, 100
Chapters, 90f.
Character indelebilis, 68, 277, 284
Charity, 198, 270, 335, 366
Charles the Great, 153
Charles V., 57, 59, 63f., 87, 110
Chartreuse, 254
Chastity, 161f., 366, 383, 442
Christ, 13, 191, 193, 321, 340, 336, 434f.
  spiritual body of, 10, 19, 22, 69
  as king and priest, 323
  sacrifice of the altar, 212
  sacrament, 258f.
  faith in, 370f.
Christian nobility, duty of, 100
Christian, the name, 339
  what makes, 342
  marks of a, 416
Christianity, 391, 397
Church, 10, 75, 172, 180f., 184, 242, 251, 257ff., 273, 310, 373
  authority of, 273ff., 451
  cannot institute sacraments, 273ff.
  community of Christians, 47
  our mother, 52
  and state, 34
Church laws, 96f.
Cicero, 147
Circumcision, 260
Circumstances, 223, 252f.
Clement V., 109, 153, 236
Clement VI., 246
Clement VII., 111
Clergy, 62, 69, 175
Coadjutorships, 91
Cognatio legalis and spiritualis, 265
Collect, 16, 213f.
Cologne, 137, 160, 173
Commandments of God, 114, 123, 131, 141, 317
Commandments, Ten, 354ff., 368ff.
Commend, 91f., 100
Commerce, 161
Communio, 10, 37
Communion, 209
  worthy, 218
  in two kinds, 7, 9, 171
  of saints, 8, 10ff., 16, 18, 20ff., 26, 29, 37, 373
Complutensian polyglott, 258
Compositions, 97
Concordat of Vienna, 84, 87f.
Confession, 206, 222, 247ff., 287, 334, 363, 422ff.
Confessionalia, 98, 128
Confirmation, 255f., 285
Congregations, power to elect priests, 67, 119
Consanguinity, spiritual, 123, 128
Conscience, 7, 13, 21, 34, 79, 115, 118, 121, 124, 129, 187ff., 218, 235, 247f., 252f., 269f., 313, 344, 346, 376f., 381f., 400f., 418, 424f., 431, 433, 437f., 441, 447, 454
Constance, Council of, 63, 82f., 84, 140ff., 186, 275
Constantine, Emperor, 77, 109
Contested benefices, 89
Contrition, 222f., 247, 334
Corporal cloths, 213, 282, 412
Corporations, 160
Corpus juris canonici, 67
Councils, 63, 65, 77f., 80, 101, 120, 172, 186f., 310
  free, 96, 113

Councils can err, 275
Courtesans, 88, 93, 100f., 105
Creed, 75, 354f., 368ff.
Cremona, 171, 177
Crusades, 38, 85
Crying sins, 364
Cyprian, 68, 143, 185

Daniel, 156, 240
  the pope as, 302, 304
Datarius, 93, 96
David, 12, 157, 198, 221, 266
Deacons, 174, 283
Death, 24f., 288, 327, 379, 391
  must serve the Christian, 324
Decretals, 109, 148, 178, 194, 233, 242
Devil, 394, 400, 408, 425
Dignities, 87, 101
Dionysius, Areopagita, 275, 286
Disparilitas religionis, 265
Dispensations, 97, 128, 137, 242, 269, 433
Divorce, 270f.
Doctorate, 150
Doctrines of men, 129, 192, 196, 200, 219, 224, 235, 248, 256, 261, 267, 326, 343ff., 398, 431ff.
Dominic, St., 116, 240
Donation of Constantine, 109
Donatus, St., 185
Dress, extravagance in, 158, 362
Duns Scotus, 147, 226
Durandus, 174

Eck, John, 168, 171, 173, 297, 306, 308
Economic reforms, 153ff.
Edification of the Church, 78f.
Elevation of the host, 214
Elisha, 157
Elvira, Council of, 67
Emperor, 100, 142, 148
Emser, 171, 173, 279
England, 72, 83, 85
Erasmus, 167, 258, 285
Erfurt, 129
Estates of Christendom, 63, 69
Eternal life, 25
Eugenius IV., 68, 98, 129, 298, 305
Evil spirit, 12
Excesses in eating and drinking, 161
Excommunication, 8, 10, 34, 37
Executio, 398, 406
Exemptions, 102
Extortion, 103
Extreme unction, 284ff.
Ezekiel, 304

Fable quoted, 325
Faculties, 133, 138
Faith, 7, 9, 19f., 23ff., 31, 76, 79, 107, 116, 133, 163, 174, 178, 183f., 186, 194, 197ff., 204ff., 214, 218ff., 228, 234, 238, 245, 288ff., 312, 364f., 368, 374f., 391, 395, 416f., 424, 443
  not a work, 207
  and promise, 230
  and works, 316f.
  alone justifies, 316, 322, 333
  all things depend on, 318
  fulfils commandments, 319, 322, 355
  unites with Christ, 320
  and love, 338, 393f., 396f., 421
Fasts, 129, 360, 409, 433
Fathers of the Church, 151, 184, 187, 190, 212, 275, 278, 436
Feast days, 27, 132, 360
Feldkirchen, 129
Fellowship, twofold, 37
  spiritual, 52
Five senses, sins of, 364
Florence, Council of, 68
Forgiveness of sins, 199, 205, 223, 249, 373
Forma sacramenti, 182, 223, 225
Foundations, 136

France, 64, 83, 107, 177
Francis, St., 116, 240, 434
Franciscans, 175, 226
Fraternities, 138
Frederick, Duke, 407
Frederick, Elector, 7, 53, 297, 307
Frederick I., 64
Frederick II., 64, 110
Free will, 180, 189
Fruits of the mass, 204f.
Fugger of Augsburg, 97, 160, 297

General Council, 9, 99
George of Saxony, 7, 53
German knights, 58
  bishops and princes, 85f.
  nation, 85f., 99, 104, 136, 139, 158, 155
  emperors, 107, 153ff., 158
  empire, 108, 153ff., 177
  mass, 214
Germans, 64, 80, 85, 101, 108, 153f., 156, 161, 172
Germany, 81, 84, 159
Gerson, John, 276
Gibeonites, 139
Gideon, 203, 227
Glosses, 92f., 95f.
God, faith in, 369f.
God's bosom, 198
Golden rule, 357f.
Golden years, 113f.
Goldfasts, 433
Gospel, 54, 150, 215, 263, 281, 315, 414, 365, 422, 424
Goths, 154
Government, good, a gift of grace, 49
Grammatical sense of Scripture, 190, 276
Gratiæ expectivæ, 100
Greek Church, 120
  emperor, 153
Greeks, 154f., 184, 225
Grimmenthal, 130

Hadrian VI., 132
Halberstadt, 88
Halle, 133
Hamburg, 137
Henry IV. and V., 108
Henry VIII., 169, 271
Heresy, 40, 80, 189, 247, 446
Heretics, 38, 53, 105, 119, 142, 179, 184, 186, 293, 359, 361, 373, 381
Herod, 49, 413
Hess, John, 58
Hezekiah, 213, 405
Himmelsbriefe, 358
Hindrance of crime, 266
  error, 267
Holy Ghost, faith in, 372f.
Hubert, St., 135
Huss, John, 52, 129, 140, 246, 275
Hussites, 140, 189
Hutten, Ulrich von, 59, 63, 85, 95, 109, 113, 120, 131
Hymns of praise, 377

Iconoclastic controversy, 404
Idolatry, 201, 407
Ignorance, 345
Images, 404, 407
Immersion, 203, 226, 231
Impediments, 123
Impedimentum criminis, 266
  erroris, 267
  ligaminis, 266
  ordinis, 267
Impotence, 269
Incarnation, 197
Incompatibilia, 92, 281
Incorporation, 93, 100
Indulgences, 85, 98, 106, 128, 131, 133, 137, 170, 189, 219, 253
Indulta, 133
Infant baptism, 236f.
Ingenwinkel, Joh., 93
Innocent I., 179
Innocent III., 72

Innocent VIII., 96
Inquisition, 38
Intercessions, 194, 209
Interdict, 72, 126
Investiture, 107
Irregular monks, 124
Isaiah, 203, 227
Isolani, Isidore, 166, 171, 177
Israel, 139, 159, 162, 221
Italy, 81

Jahrmarkt, 95
James, St., Epistle of, 285
Jehu, 157
Jereboam, 251, 280
Jeremiah, 50, 152, 448
Jerome, 119, 219, 400
  of Prague, 140
John XXII., 94
Jonas, Justus, 402
Jordan, crossing of, 25
Joseph, affliction of, 238
Jubilee years, 113
Judas, 216f.
Judgment day, 140, 161
Julius II., 64, 82, 98, 111, 140, 301
Jus patronum, 91
Jus verbi, 398
Justification by faith, 316, 318

Kessler, John, 389
Keys, power of, 75, 242, 247, 260, 290, 373
Kingdom of God, 377f., 448
Kingship of the Christian, 324
Kirchweihen, 128
Koran, 149

Laity, 62, 69, 80, 174, 181, 185, 191, 209, 282, 325f.
Lang, Johan, 58, 60
Lateran Council, 102, 107, 159, 188
Law, the, 317f.
Law in the universities, 148ff.
Laws as snares for souls, 53
  of men, 263, 400, 410, 412, 434f., v. Doctrines of men.
Lay-baptism, 67
Legal relationships, 265
Leipzig, 129, 172f.
  Disputation, 297, 307
Leo III., 153
Leo X., 58, 82, 298, 301ff., 309
Letters of confession, 98
Liberty, 76, 129, 144, 177, 187, 232, 235, 237f., 240, 253, 264, 268, 277, 282, 300, 312ff., 318, 324f., 327, 342, 343, 395, 397, 403, 410, 414, 431, 454
  not external, 313
  and service, 337
Licenses, 133
Link, Wenceslaus, 36, 387
Livings, 87f.
Lombard, Peter, 188, 223, 225
Lord's Prayer, 354f., 374ff., 425
Lord's Supper, 7, 167, 180, 381
Lotther, Melchior, 58, 170
Louis, King of France, 140
Louvain, 173
Love, 17, 145, 183, 200, 364, 392, 420
Luther, 176, 293, 424f.
  pastoral concern, 36
  the German, 59, 63
  as a fool, 62, 99, 118, 121, 140
  knowledge of Aristotle, 147
  not a mathematician, 160
  as a musician, 164, 166, 273, 405
  compelled to speak, 164
  his progress, 170, 178
  his duty, 195, 216, 240, 293, 303
  recantation, 293, 307, 309, 399
  appeal to a council, 301
  zeal, 302
  separation from Rome, 305
  appeal to the pope, 309
  friend of the pope, 311

Luther, his faith, 312
as a reformer, 393f., 399
purpose of writing, 421

Magdeburg, 88
Magistrate, 263
Mainz, 82, 88, 90
Man, nature of, 313
inward, 313ff., 328
outward, 328ff.
of sin, 102, 236
Manichæans, 439, 441, 452
Manoah, 227
Marcus Aurelius, 222
Margaret of Braunschweig, 7
Marriage, 96, 243, 257ff., 437
of the clergy, 118ff., 401
forbidden degrees, 128, 264
a type, 260, 320
a sacrament, 260
hindrances, 261f., 268
Martyrs, 16
Mass, 16, 31, 197, 199ff., 207, 280, 360, 365, 394
sacrifice of, 7, 210, 280, 397, 407
letters, 128, 137
anniversary, 125
mortuary, 125, 208
endowed, 136
Maximilian, Emperor, 140
Mecklenburg, 129
Medicine in universities, 148
Meissen, 7
Melanchthon, 387, 399
Melchizedek, 323
Memorial days, 194
Mendicants orders, 115, 135
Merchants, 158
Merseburg, 7
Miltitz, Carl von, 297, 307
Ministerium, 406
Ministry, 120, 246, 326
Miracles, 79, 130
Missa catechumenorum and fidelium, 54
Monasteries, 124, 152, 209
Monastic life, 162
Monstrance, 213
Moses, 221, 227, 405, 432
Moses' seat, 450
Mother of God, 15
Mühlpfort, Hieronymus, 300
Murner, Thomas, 169
Mute sins, 362, 364
Mystery, 18
and sacrament, 258
Mystics, 8

Name of God, 356, 359, 365, 376
Naples and Sicily, Kingdom of, 110
Nathan, 157
Natural law, 357
revelation, 355
New Testament, 318
Nicæa, Council of, 77, 101, 143, 404
Nimrod, 171, 262
Noah, 198, 203, 227
Nobility, German, 57, 164, v. German.
Nürnberg, Diet of, 72, 85, 135, 138, 159f.

Oblations, 214
Observance, 172, 174, 254
Occam, William of, 144, 188
Officia of the pope, 99, 106
Officials, 41, 48, 103, 264
Old Testament, 317
Opus operantis, 23, 216
Opus operatum, 22f., 196, 204, 207, 216
Order to be observed, 394
Orders, monastic, 115ff., 239, 434, 441f., 446
Ordinaries, 100
Ordination, 174, 267, 273ff., 285, 290
Origen, 190, 276

Ottilia, St., 127
Our Lady, 27

PALLIUM, 89, 100f., 107
Palmers, 135
Papacy, 57, 171, 178
Papal court, 83ff.
  secretaries, 84
  months, 86f., 100
  family, 88, 106
  servant, 88, 104
  letters, 106
  homage, 111
Parents, duty toward, 360
Participations, 194, 204
Passover, 15
Patience, 392, 396, 410
Patron saints, 27
Paul, St., 12, 112, 175, 183, 237, 285, 339, 399, 405, 410, 436
Penalties to be abolished, 126
Penance, 136, 167, 177, 181, 222, 232, 245, 260, 290, 292, 351
  second plank, 219, 222
Penitence, 334
Persia, 155
Peter, St., 75, 77, 80, 143, 247, 373 411
Pfeffinger, D., 137
Philip of Hesse, 271
Philosophy, 193
Picards, 144
Pilate, 49, 81, 413
Pilgrimages, 113, 130, 219, 251
Pius, Pope, 301
Pope, 86, 89, 94f., 100, 133, 139, 143, 177, 188, 232, 239, 262, 400, 424, 436
  power of, 65, 86, 101, 108f., 122, 145, 157, 171, 181, 186, 246, 290, 308, 310
  can be deposed, 72
  errors of, 242, 271
  tyranny, 233f.
Pope an idol, 112
  compared with Christ, 111
  wealth of, 99
  infallibility of, 73
  worldliness of, 80, 112
  vicar of crucified Christ, 81, 109, 111
  vicar of absent Christ, 310
  duty of, 102f., 110f., 148, 219, 250
  temporal power of, 110, 153
  letter to, 297f.
Power not to be trusted, 63f.
Prague, 129, 143
Prayer, 126, 206, 210, 213, 237, 286, 291, 325, 377ff.
Preachers, 16, 200, 380
Preaching, true, 326f., 334, 448
Prebend, 137
Precepts of the Church, 341, 343, 417
Presbyters, 288f.
Prierias, Sylvester, 58, 73f., 77, 170, 172, 302
Priesthood of believers, 66, 75, 279f., 283, 324f.
  why men seek, 162, 241
  is ministry of the Word, 282f.
Priests, 174, 202, 220, 251, 267, 277, 279, 282, 325f.
Priests, officeholders, 68f., 136, 283
  duty of, 278, 314, 340
Primate, 101, 104
Private confession, 250, 424f.
  mass, 215, 397
Privilegium fori, 70
Promise of God, 198f., 208, 210, 220, 245, 291, 317
Proprius motus, 94
Prostitution, 161, 362
Proverbs quoted, 46, 62, 113, 162, 176
Purgatory, 382

QUEDLINBURG, convent, 118

Real presence, 20, 23, 144
Reason, 63
Reformation, 63, 90f., 96, 116
Reforms suggested, 27, 61
Regeneration, 230
Regensburg, 130
Regression, 94
Remission of sins, 203
Rentenkauf, 159
Repentance, 220f., 363
Res sacramenti, 182, 215, 223, 225, 232, 265
Reservatio pectoralis, 94, 105
Reservation, right of, 86ff., 100, 104
Reserved cases, 105, 124, 138, 251
Rhine-toll, 97
Rods, three, 65f.
Roman curia, 57, 83f., 303, 308
Roman Empire, 108, 110, 153
Roman See, 87, 119, 123, 135, 140, 154, 254, 291, 303
Romanists, 65, 80, 185, 262
Rome, 83f., 89, 96, 104, 113, 133, 164, 166, 303ff.
Rulers, wicked, 49, 51

Sacrament of the Altar, 178, 222, 412ff., 425
  institution of, 212, 419
  reception of, 413ff.
  not a law, 417
  not a sacrifice, 136
  daily use of, 9, 14
  significance of, 10ff., 17, 31, 418f.
  preparation for, 15, 178, 197, 202, 206, 418
  benefit of, 17, 26
  a sign, 19
  purpose of, 21
  misuse of, 22
  faith of, 24
  right use of, 24, 420
  necessity of, 24
Sacrament, types of, 25
  and the pope, 112
Sacraments, 7, 9, 54, 132, 136, 167, 177, 194, 196, 208, 217, 223, 226, 255ff., 273, 275, 288f.
  parts of, 9, 245
  signs of, 9, 17, 24f., 226
  two principal, 26, 291
  grace of, 182
  fount of love, 206
  not a good work, 206
  efficacy of, 226, 228, 230, 237
  of Old and New Law, 226f., 257ff.
  significance of, 227
  not effective signs of grace, 229, 286f.
  institution of, 285
Sacramentum is mystery, 18
Sacrifices, 260
Safe conduct, 140f.
Saints, 12, 131, 251
Saints' days, 27f., 127
Samuel, 157
Sardica, Council of, 102
Satisfactions, 219, 222, 247, 253f., 334
Saul, 157
Schism, 183f.
Schismatics, 53
Schools, Christian, 118
  for girls, 151
Scrinium pectoris, 148
Scriptures, 8, 65, 73f., 146, 148, 173, 175, 180, 188f., 240, 255, 259, 261, 276, 291, 354, 402, 429, 432, 451, 454
  commands and promises, 317
Sebastian, St., 27
Secret sin, 106, 124f.
Sects, 219
Sedulius, Cœlius, 293
Sentences, 150, 188, 204, 223
Sententious theologians, 229

Sermons, 54, 217
Signatura gratiæ and justitiæ, 104
Significasti, Chapter, 107
Simony, 94
Sins, 12, 34, 51, 358ff., 364
  demand punishment, 73
  seven deadly, 364
Siricius, Pope, 119
Sixtus IV., 67
Slanderers, 21
Social evil, 161
Sodalities, 8, 26, 128, 137
Solite, Chapter, 108
Solomon, 157
Soul, 190
  immortality of, 107
Spalatin, 7, 57f., 73, 90, 166, 298, 429
Spice trade, 159
Spiritual, what makes us, 66
  duties, 54, 103, 314
  relationship, 265
  law, 126f.
States of the Church, 110
Stationaries, 135
Staupitz, 36, 58
Stephen, St., 237
Sternberg, 129
Strassburg, 90
Students, restriction of, 152
Substance and accident, 188, 191
Sycophants, 182, 184
Synaxis, 10

Tatianists, 438f., 441
Teachings of men, 7, v. Doctrines of men.
Temporal estate, 66
  power, 38, 54, 65, 70, 73, 78f., 80, 99, 104, 162
Temptations, 382f.
Ten Commandments, 354ff.
Testament, 196, 199, 206
Testament, words of, 214
Tetzel, 297
Teufelsbriefe, 358
Theodidacti, 348
Theodosius, 158
Theology in the universities, 148
  text-books, 151
Theses, XCV, 36, 73, 297
Thomists, 226
Timothy, 339
Titus, 339
Transaccidentation, 192
Transubstantiation, 19, 188ff., 204, 212
  of communicant, 22
Trent, Council of, 68, 174
Trier, 82, 130
Triple crown, 80
Truth, 210, 221, 248, 274, 363, 445
Tulich, Herman, 170
Turks, 41, 44, 46, 82, 85f., 106, 149, 154, 187, 368
  worst in Rome, 98, 233
Types, 227, 260, 323
Tyranny, Roman 187, 245, 253, 290, 301, 326

Unbelief, 222, 319f, 359
Unchastity, 360, 362, 377
Unio, 93, 100
Unity of the Church, 145
Universities, 146, 153, 291
Usury, 96, 362

Valentine, St., 135
Valla, Laurentius, 109
Varna, Battle of, 139
Venice, 64, 95, 133, 154
Vergil, 293, 304
Vienna, Council, of 236
Virgin Mary, 339
Visions, 175

Votaries, 239
Votive masses, 215
Vows, 96, 118, 219, 237, 243, 267, 403, 442
of celibacy, 121, 162
ceremonial laws, 240
triple, 244

Wallbrüder, 135
Walls, the three, of Rome, 65f.
Wartburg, 387, 423, 429
Wicked, success of, 49
Will of God, 378ff., 381
Wilsnack, 129
Witchcraft, 358, 376
Wittenberg, 133, 137, 166, 387, 392, 415, 420
Wladislav, 139
Word of God, 50, 54, 69, 134, 150, 181, 194, 209, 229, 236, 273, 278, 291, 303, 314, 333, 397ff., 414, 430, 448
Works, 7, 16, 31, 114, 136, 162, 189, 194f., 198, 200, 206, 210, 219, 223, 238, 251f., 259, 315, 322, 325, 328, 333, 340, 344, 365, 391, 407
measure of, 241, 329, 341
good, are sins, 249
do not justify, 329, 335
Works of love, 335
six, of mercy, 364
World, 13
Worms, Diet of, 72, 85, 94, 100, 102, 135, 138, 158, 160, 387
Worship, true, 201, 319, 432
Würzburg, 82
Wyclif, 52, 93, 187, 189

Zedekiah, 139
Zink, Johannes, 93
Zinskauf, 159
Zwickau Prophets, 388
Zwilling, Gabriel, 387f., 402

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Genesis—	Page
1 : 31	22
2 : 15	330
3 : 15	198
3 : 17ff	161
3 : 19	120
4 : 5	217
9 : 12	198
9 : 15	203
12 : 3	198
13 : 5	171
17 : 10ff	203
18 : 19	423
19 : 24	89
21 : 12	76
49 : 3	323
Exodus—	
12 : 8, 11	15
12 : 35f	122
13 : 2	323
13 : 13	242
20 : 4	404
20 : 12	47
20 : 17	317
22 : 28	50
23 : 15	202
34 : 20	202
37 : 7	405
Leviticus—	
8 : 27	213
11 : 19	431
18 : 6ff	262, 264
Numbers—	
3 : 13	323
21 : 9	404
22 : 28	76, 151
24 : 24	154
Deuteronomy—	
1 : 31	393
4 : 2	432, 451
4 : 19	408
8 : 3	204
10 : 16	228
12 : 32	451
14 : 18	431

Deuteronomy—	Page
16 : 16	202
18 : 18	198
23 : 12f	431
24 : 1	305
25 : 5	268
28 : 14	344
32 : 35	50
Joshua—	
3 : 7ff	25
6 : 20	66
9 : 19ff	139
Judges—	
6 : 36ff	203, 227
9 : 2	18
13 : 19	227
20 : 21	64
I. Samuel—	
2 : 30	320
10 : 1	157
16 : 13	157
II. Samuel 7 : 16	198
I. Kings—	
1 : 38f	157
12 : 26ff	251
12 : 31	280
18 : 21	315
19 : 20	310
II. Kings—	
9 : 1ff	157
18 : 4	405
24 : 20	139
25 : 4ff	139
Esther 1 : 5	20
Job 31 : 27f	315
Psalms—	
13 : 3f	378
14 : 5	436
18 : 8	249
18 : 26	28, 128, 239
19 : 1ff	260
19 : 8	344
23 : 5	204
30 : 5	335
32 : 5f	423

Psalms—	Page
33 : 16	64
44 : 23	232
58 : 4	344
63 : 5	214
64 : 1	242
67 : 1f	348
104 : 15	12, 255
106 : 3	423
107 : 20	198, 314
109 : 28	52
111 : 2	205
112 : 7f	327
115 : 1	201
119	314
119 : 85	266
134 : 2	214
137 : 1f	247, 273
143 : 2	249, 382
Proverbs—	
6 : 27	347
15 : 8	217
30 : 5f	448
30 : 15	254
Ecclesiastes—	
1 : 2, 14	222
3 : 7	61
Song of Solomon 2 : 16	322
Isaiah—	
2 : 8	239
3 : 4	49
3 : 10	310
5 : 4	247
3 : 13f	283
7 : 10ff	203, 227
9 : 20	252
10 : 22	316
28 : 14	281
28 : 21	217
29 : 13	432
37 : 4	213
55 : 8f	455
56 : 10	220
61 : 8	243
66 : 2	418
Jeremiah—	
2 : 32	204, 219
4 : 4	228
5 : 3	241
17 : 9	408
23 : 21	395
29 : 7	50
48 : 10	303
51 : 9	304

Lamentations—	Page
1 : 1f	236
1 : 11	326
2 : 11ff	152
Ezekiel 2 : 6	304
Daniel—	
1 : 6ff	240
2 : 21	155
3 : 30	156
4 : 14	155
4 : 35	155
5 : 29	156
6 : 16	304
11 : 39, 43	82
Hosea—	
2 : 19f	321
4 : 6	279
4 : 15	252
10 : 5	252
13 : 9	317
Joel 1 : 5	236
Amos—	
6 : 1	281
6 : 4–6	238
8 : 11f	314
Jonah 3 : 5	248
Habakkuk 2 : 4	315
Zechariah 2 : 8	12
Malachi 2 : 7	279
Matthew—	
3 : 2	334
3 : 6	249
4 : 1ff	389
4 : 4	204, 314
4 : 17	334
5 : 3	365
5 : 16	376
5 : 18	317
5 : 22	361
5 : 25	52
5 : 29	235
5 : 32	271
5 : 40	45
5 : 45	38, 338
6 : 7	126
6 : 12	425
6 : 14	424
7 : 3	302
7 : 12	358
7 : 15	235, 334
7 : 18	331
7 : 20	332
8 : 13	290, 370
9 : 1ff	237

Matthew— Page
10 : 7 . . . 448
10 : 8 . . . 195
10 : 10 . . . 110
10 : 16 . . . 304
10 : 40 . . . 448
11 : 23 . . . 392
12 : 1ff . . . 345
12 : 33 . . . 332
13 : 14 . . . 131
13 : 52 . . . 334
15 : 4 . . . 133
15 : 8 . . . 432
15 : 9 . . . 435
15 : 11 . . . 129, 433, 435
15 : 13 . . . 395
15 : 14 . . . 332, 345
16 : 19 . . . 434, 245f., 373, 454
17 : 5 . . . 434
17 : 24ff . . . 340
17 : 33 . . . 302
18 : 4 . . . 73
18 : 10 . . . 48
18 : 15 . . . 39, 76, 242, 250f., 422
18 : 18 . . . 373
18 : 19f . . . 145, 245, 273, 424
18 : 20 . . . 252
18 : 24, 28 . . . 41
19 : 6 . . . 123, 263f.
19 : 11ff . . . 118
21 : 13 . . . 303
22 : 2f . . . 20
23 : 3f . . . 450
23 : 8 . . . 448
23 : 13 . . . 127, 302, 450
23 : 14 . . . 126
23 : 15 . . . 238
23 : 16f . . . 450
24 : 5 . . . 225
24 : 15 . . . 263
24 : 23ff . . . 446
24 : 24 . . . 79, 130
25 : 15 . . . 449
25 : 40 . . . 12
26 . . . 179
26 : 2 . . . 419
26 : 21ff . . . 15, 419
26 : 26 . . . 100, 193ff., 413
26 : 27 . . . 179, 180, 192
26 : 28 . . . 182
26 : 29 . . . 26, 292
26 : 41 . . . 278
27 : 34 . . . 413
27 : 35 . . . 94
28 : 19 . . . 278, 449

Mark— Page
2 : 27f . . . 264
6 : 13 . . . 288
9 : 23 . . . 237, 290
10 : 16 . . . 255
11 : 24 . . . 289
14 . . . 179
14 : 22 . . . 190
14 : 23 . . . 179
15 : 23 . . . 413
16 : 15 . . . 278, 449
16 : 16 . . . 209, 220, 230, 246, 316
16 : 17 . . . 288
16 : 18 . . . 255f.

Luke—
1 : 38 . . . 453
1 : 52 . . . 310
1 : 53 . . . 15
2 : 22ff . . . 339
2 : 34 . . . 259
6 : 30 . . . 44
7 : 16 . . . 414
9 : 48 . . . 73
9 : 56 . . . 42
10 : 7 . . . 136
10 : 9 . . . 448
10 : 16 . . . 234, 448
11 : 5ff . . . 291
11 : 16 . . . 369
11 : 28 . . . 291
12 : 14 . . . 111
12 : 32 . . . 205
16 : 22 . . . 198
17 : 20f . . . 254, 413, 447
21 : 34 . . . 161
22 . . . 179
22 : 19f . . . 14, 190, 197
22 : 25f . . . 109
22 : 32 . . . 75
22 : 20 . . . 195f., 199
23 : 26 . . . 414

John—
1 : 12 . . . 318, 392
1 : 51 . . . 343
4 : 14 . . . 205, 312
5 : 46 . . . 432
6 : 9 . . . 304
6 : 27 . . . 316
6 : 35, 41, 51 . . . 174
6 : 37, 39 . . . 42
6 : 45 . . . 74, 151, 348
6 : 53, 55 . . . 174
6 : 54 . . . 178
6 : 63 . . . 178
7 : 38 . . . 205

John— Page
8 : 7 ... 302
8 : 11 ... 254
8 : 26 ... 314
8 : 44 ... 302
8 : 50 ... 311
9 : 31 ... 217, 325
10 : 27 ... 234
11 : 25 ... 314
13 : 1ff ... 111
13 : 20 ... 448
14 : 6 ... 276, 371
17 : 9, 20 ... 75
17 : 12 ... 304
17 : 36 ... 81
18 : 36 ... 323, 344
20 : 15–17 ... 90
20 : 22ff ... 75
20 : 23 ... 245

Acts—
2 : 46f ... 16, 20, 190
3 : 6 ... 429
4 : 34f ... 213
5 : 5 ... 43
5 : 9 ... 80
5 : 39 ... 130
6 : 4 ... 283
6 : 6 ... 255
8 : 18ff ... 94
8 : 17 ... 255
8 : 37 ... 453
9 : 15 ... 436
9 : 19 ... 12, 255
13 : 10 ... 302
14 : 11–16 ... 112
15 : 6 ... 77
16 : 3 ... 339, 410
17 : 16ff ... 399
17 : 22 ... 405
17 : 54 ... 275
18 : 6 ... 255
28 : 11 ... 405

Romans— Page
1 : 1ff ... 315
1 : 5 ... 225
1 : 17 ... 315
1 : 28 ... 263
1 : 32 ... 105
3 : 10ff ... 315
3 : 23 ... 315
4 : 3 ... 320
4 ... 197
4 : 11 ... 228
4 : 18 ... 453
5 : 3 ... 288
5 : 4 ... 392
5 : 5 ... 338
6 : 4, 6 ... 230
7 : 22f ... 329
8 : 23 ... 328
8 : 28 ... 235, 324, 370
8 : 31 ... 221
8 : 35, 38 ... 38
8 : 36 ... 232
9 : 16 ... 201
9 : 33 ... 259
10 : 4 ... 315
10 : 9 ... 315
10 : 10 ... 316
10 : 17 ... 335
11 : 32 ... 318f.
12 : 4ff ... 69
12 : 17 ... 81
12 : 19 ... 50
13 ... 70
13 : 1, 4 ... 71, 109, 340
13 : 4 ... 69, 99
13 : 8 ... 312
13 : 10 ... 31, 198, 323, 364
14 : 1ff ... 340, 345
14 : 3 ... 343
14 : 5 ... 237, 240
14 : 7f ... 335
14 : 14f ... 345
14 : 22 ... 346
14 : 23 ... 218

I. Corinthians—
1 : 1f ... 285
1 : 2 ... 11
1 : 7 ... 234
1 : 21 ... 333
1 : 23 ... 81, 259
2 : 2 ... 81, 276
2 : 7ff ... 259, 348
2 : 12 ... 293
2 : 15 ... 76, 274
3 : 18 ... 62
3 : 22f ... 324
4 : 1 ... 232, 246, 258f., 279, 326
4 : 15 ... 265
4 : 20 ... 413
5 : 5 ... 42f.
5 : 11 ... 39, 53
6 : 1ff ... 54, 149
6 : 7 ... 103
6 : 12 ... 393
7 : 5 ... 438
7 : 7 ... 118, 163
7 : 9 ... 272

I. Corinthians— Page
7 : 15 ... 272
7 : 18ff ... 400
7 : 23 ... 144, 233
8 : 4 ... 256
8 : 13 ... 345
9 : 4ff ... 123
9 : 14 ... 136
9 : 19 ... 312
9 : 27 ... 329
10 ... 260
10 : 5 ... 193
10 : 16 ... 193
10 : 17 ... 11
10 : 23 ... 123
10 : 25ff ... 129, 186
11 ... 179
11 : 20ff ... 213
11 : 21 ... 16, 183
11 : 23 ... 175, 183, 190, 193, 196, 285
11 : 24f ... 195, 199f., 203, 247, 277
11 : 25 ... 193
11 : 29 ... 21
11 : 30 ... 24
12 : 12ff ... 66, 69
12 : 25f ... 11
13 : 1 ... 392, 430
13 : 2f ... 421
13 : 5 ... 342, 367
13 : 12 ... 392
14 : 23 ... 281
14 : 30 ... 74
15 : 55ff ... 322, 327

II. Corinthians—
2 : 17 ... 302
3 : 17 ... 76
4 ... 260
4 : 13 ... 76
4 : 16 ... 313
10 : 3 ... 344
10 : 8 ... 78
11 : 13 ... 302
11 : 31 ... 348
12 : 9 ... 324
13 : 8 ... 79
13 : 10 ... 42, 53

Galatians—
1 : 8 ... 120, 180, 188, 212, 402, 432, 444
2 : 3 ... 339, 343, 410
2 : 11ff ... 76, 410
2 : 14 ... 411
2 : 20 ... 337, 344
3 : 4 ... 197
4 : 4 ... 313

Galatians— Page
5 : 1 ... 123, 144
5 : 6 ... 336
5 : 17 ... 313
5 : 22f ... 267
5 : 24 ... 329
6 : 2 ... 14, 336, 373
6 : 5 ... 209

Ephesians—
2 : 3 ... 391
2 : 8 ... 224
3 : 20 ... 205
4 : 4f ... 133
4 : 14 ... 196
4 : 28 ... 335
5 : 9 ... 267
5 : 27 ... 321
5 : 29ff ... 260
5 : 31f ... 18, 257ff., 320
6 : 12 ... 394
6 : 17 ... 30

Philippians—
1 : 21 ... 288
2 : 1ff ... 336
2 : 4 ... 145, 375
2 : 5 ... 81, 336
2 : 6f ... 313
2 : 7 ... 17, 109, 335
3 : 2 ... 302
4 : 13 ... 284, 325

Colossians—
2 : 16ff ... 440f.
2 : 20 ... 118
2 : 22 ... 228

I. Thessalonians—
2 : 16 ... 304
4 : 6 ... 266
5 : 21 ... 81
5 : 22 ... 161

II. Thessalonians—
2 : 3 ... 102, 139, 236
2 : 3–10 ... 73
2 : 9f ... 79
2 : 11f ... 134
3 : 10 ... 135
3 : 14f ... 39
3 : 15 ... 42

I. Timothy—
1 : 7 ... 287
1 : 9 ... 318, 343
2 : 1f ... 210
2 : 8 ... 214
3 : 2 ... 119, 267, 281
3 : 16 ... 177, 258
4 : 1ff ... 262, 265, 402, 436

I. Timothy—	Page
4 : 2f	240
4 : 3	264
4 : 4f	256, 289
4 : 5	213
4 : 8	439
5 : 22	255
II. Timothy—	
2 : 3	111
2 : 9	309
2 : 13	221
3 : 2	184
3 : 5–7	117, 333, 348
3 : 7	290, 348
3 : 8	189
3 : 13	216, 332
Titus—	
1 : 6	119
1 : 14	196, 445
3 : 1	340
3 : 5	221, 333
Hebrews—	
1 : 3	198
6	323
9 : 16	197
10 : 19, 22	325
10 : 23	221
11	260
11 : 6	332
12 : 15	346
James—	
1 : 6f	211, 289
1 : 18	198
5 : 14f	285
5 : 16	210, 287
I. Peter—	
2 : 1ff	70
2 : 2	393

I. Peter—	Page
2 : 9	66, 69, 279, 323
2 : 10	71
2 : 13, 15	71, 109
2 : 14	99
2 : 18	365
3 : 13	38, 235
5 : 3	106
5 : 5	308
5 : 10	316
II. Peter—	
1 : 9	223
2 : 1	444
2 : 1–3	446
2 : 3	93
I. John—	
1 : 9f	249
2 : 18, 22	73
3 : 2	18
4 : 3	73
II. John 10	39
Revelation—	
2 : 9	281
5 : 10	66
13	73
22 : 11	305

OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

Judith 6 : 15	308
Wisdom 6 : 8f	47
Ecclesiasticus—	
10 : 13	332
32 : 27	241
Baruch—	
1 : 11	50
3 : 38	335
II. Maccabees 4 : 8, 12	146

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Vol. II